

KUBO

... AND THE TWO STRINGS

Based on an original Japanese folk tale by Shannon Tindle

Story by Shannon Tindle and Marc Haimes

Screenplay by Marc Haimes

First Rewrite

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Studio: Laika

IN BLACK.

A child's whispered VOICE hisses through the darkness...

CHILD'S VOICE (O.S.)
If you must blink, do it now!

With these words, an unblinking WHITE EYE fills the screen.

It's actually the MOON, presiding over the night sky as the whispered voice continues...

CHILD'S VOICE (O.S.)
*Pay careful attention to everything
you see and hear.*

Which is when we notice the eerie howling of WIND, building to a level of intensity we weren't quite expecting.

A WAVE suddenly rises in front of the full moon, momentarily ECLIPSING it from view. Then another.

And now we realize we are --

EXT. OCEAN -- STORMY NIGHT

A tiny BOAT comes into view, tossing in the waves.

It takes us a moment to determine: it's not that the boat is so small...

It's that the waves are UNBELIEVABLY ENORMOUS, cresting thousands of feet high!

CHILD'S VOICE (O.S.)
*... No matter how unusual it may
seem.*

That's when we hear it, rising above the sounds of the storm:

It's *SINGING*. Lovely. Hopeful. Inexplicable.

A chromatic MELODY weaving in and around the howls of wind.

It grows louder as we PUSH IN on what we now see is a wooden FISHING BOAT *surrounded by a strange, otherworldly GLOW!*

We spot the boat's lone PASSENGER:

A beautiful, young ASIAN WOMAN with long, long black HAIR whipping in the wind!

She kneels on the floor of the boat, plucking a stringed "SHAMISEN" instrument and calmly SINGING that sweet song.

A NEW ANGLE brings us inside the boat, closer to this woman. And the moment we make this CUT, all sounds of the storm...

INSTANTLY CEASE!

What we are left with is only the SONG, filling the boat with its soft beauty. It's as if this woman has created a COCOON around her of warm SOUND and heavenly LIGHT.

Despite everything, all is CALM inside this boat.

We even have a moment to get a closer look at this woman:

We now notice the cuts and bruises on her face and body. The weakened hunch of her shoulders.

Like she has recently emerged from some terrible ordeal.

As her long, long hair continues to whip in the muted wind, we catch a glimpse of something she is wearing on her back:

A woven, cloth bag embroidered with the image of a BEETLE.

But before we can get a better look, we suddenly spot the TSUNAMI-SIZED WAVE, rising up silently in front of our boat!

IT'S GOING TO CRASH DOWN UPON US, CONSUMING US COMPLETELY!!!

Until the woman subtly SHIFTS the melody she is singing, plucking a single unexpected NOTE on her shamisen --

-- and the sea literally PARTS in front of her, allowing her safe access right past the enormous wave!

The fishing boat floats onward, approaching something in the distance: a rocky COASTLINE, leading up to high cliffs.

Spotting the land, the woman gives a small, imperceptible smile as we hear...

CHILD'S VOICE (O.S.)
And please be warned. If you
fidget. If you look away. If you
cease to believe any of this, even
for an instant...

But before the narrator can finish his sentence, we notice:

Another LARGER wave is now SURGING UP behind the woman --

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. ROCKY BEACH -- MOMENTS LATER

Propelled by that huge wave, the fishing boat RAMS into the rocky shore! The woman is THROWN from the boat.

She comes flying towards us, SMASHING her head on a rock!

She's left lying in the sand. Blanketed by her tangled hair. The ocean swelling and retreating underneath her limp body.

As she lies there unmoving, the narrator concludes...

CHILD'S VOICE (O.S.)
*... Then our hero will surely
 perish.*

Which is when we hear it. The CRYING of an infant. It wakes the young woman. Her eyes snap OPEN.

She slowly, painfully begins CRAWLING across the sand towards the crying. It's coming from *inside* that woven bag.

As she reaches the bag and draws it to her chest, suddenly --

A tiny HAND pokes out of it!

The hand belongs to a BABY! It was in the bag, now emerging from the swaddled cloth. We can't yet see its face.

As she cradles the infant, the young woman's lips begin MOVING again. With whatever last bits of strength she has remaining, she is trying to resume her SONG.

The melody is whispered. Diminished. But it still causes that WARM LIGHT to form protectively around her and the baby.

We watch them from a HIGH ANGLE, like we're standing somewhere up on those cliffs, as the narrator adds...

CHILD'S VOICE (O.S.)
*His name is Kubo. His grandfather
 stole something from him.*

Just as we're hearing these words, the baby turns his head towards the cliffs and stares up at us.

And now we can see:

THE BLOODY BANDAGE WRAPPED AROUND THE INFANT'S LEFT EYE!!!

CHILD'S VOICE (O.S.)
And that really is the least of it.

SMASH TO:

BLACK.

GHOSTING IN TITLE: **KUBO**

THEN: ... **AND THE TWO STRINGS**

Our title lingers for a moment and ghosts away.

We then begin ROLLING CREDITS as we slowly FADE IN, coming face to face with --

A MONKEY

A serious monkey. Staring right at us. FIXED expression.

That's because this monkey is actually a carved wooden CHARM, standing about four inches high. Also known as a *netsuke*.

The netsuke is positioned next to a thin MAT, facing:

A sleeping BOY. He could be about ten years old.

He slumbers in a ROBE with a distinct crest of a BEETLE on the back. That same design we saw before on the bag.

The boy rolls over and slowly WAKES, opening one EYE. From the angle we're watching him, we can't yet see the other.

The boy yawns and stretches. Rubs the eye we *do* see.

Then a NEW ANGLE reveals the *EYE PATCH* he is wearing around his other eye... the left one.

What should be clear by now is that this boy is that same baby we saw in the prologue, several years later.

His name is KUBO. He is our hero.

Without a single wasted motion, Kubo jumps out of bed and into his *hakama* pants, folded on a shelf of STONE.

In fact, all the shelves in this little, dark room are made of stone. That's because it's not a room at all.

Kubo is actually living inside --

INT. CAVE -- EARLY MORNING (PRE-DAWN)

By the light of the FULL MOON outside, Kubo walks to a little kitchen area and strikes flint, starting a fire.

We watch as he gracefully pours and heats two pots of water, preparing both RICE and TEA.

As the water boils he proceeds to tidy up the place, picking up the dozens of --

Strewn pieces of PAPER, inexplicably littering the ground.

The paper is creased and wrinkled. As if it had been elaborately folded and then unfolded again.

Kubo smooths each sheet out as best he can. He stacks the paper and places it back on a shelf.

Then he turns to regard --

A SLEEPING WOMAN

Lying on a second mat in the corner of the cave. We hadn't noticed her until now.

As Kubo steps over and kneels down by her side, we see this is the same woman from our prologue.

But now she seems older and PALER. There are wrinkles and creases on her face... just like that strewn paper. Her long, long black hair is streaked with silvery GRAY.

We will come to learn her name is SARIATU. Kubo's mother.

Kubo watches her for a moment. His expression inscrutable. After a moment, he extends a hand and gently TOUCHES her arm.

Sariatu's eyes flutter open. Sees Kubo, kneeling there.

He gives her a small smile. An unspoken "good morning." Sariatu hesitates. Then smiles back. However --

There's CONFUSION in her eyes. FEEBLENESS to her movements.

Still, she allows Kubo to take her hand and help her up.

The netsuke statue appears to be watching all this as we --

PULL BACK:

Revealing the monkey statue has been MOVED. It is now --

INT. DINING AREA -- CAVE -- EARLY MORNING

Kubo and his mother kneel in front of bamboo dining mats. The netsuke is positioned between them. It's breakfast time.

Kubo serves his mother rice. Pours her tea. Even blows into her cup to cool it for her.

Sariatu eats just a little. Then angles her head, staring strangely into space. A bit of rice falls onto her chin.

Kubo sees the rice. Lightly wipes it away with his hand. He continues to watch her, his face betraying CONCERN.

Sariatu just keeps chewing mildly and staring at nothing.

It's obvious by now: *something is wrong with Sariatu as we --*

PULL BACK AGAIN:

Revealing Sariatu is now sitting --

INT. ENTRANCE -- CAVE -- EARLY MORNING

We realize: the cave where Kubo lives is hidden high up on CLIFFS. The ones we saw from the beach in our opening.

Sariatu kneels on a woven mat here at the caves's entrance, staring down at the high WAVES of the ocean below.

Kubo is next to her, working intently on something. His small nimble hands are moving rapidly, confidently.

And now we see what he's doing: Kubo is FOLDING those sheets of paper he stacked earlier into an assortment of --

ORIGAMI FIGURES!

We spot BIRDS with flappable wings... ELEPHANTS with movable trunks... SNAKES with rattling tails.

Kind of incredible how swiftly and expertly he does this.

But then Kubo STOPS. Double takes. He's looking over at something on the floor directly in front of Sariatu.

It's an almost magically EXQUISITE piece of origami.

As good as Kubo's work is, this one is AMAZING! It's some kind of mystical CREATURE with fully articulated limbs.

The creature almost appears to MOVE on its own slightly as Kubo grabs and admires it. He then glances at his mother.

She's still staring into space. But, just for an instant, we see something flash across her face. SATISFACTION!

Which is when we hear it: a BELL chiming in the distance.

Kubo gazes out of the cave's entrance to see the SUN is just beginning to rise over the ocean below.

This triggers Kubo into ACTION.

As the orange light of DAWN begins to fill the cave, Kubo hastily packs all his origami figures into a large woven BAG.

We catch a glimpse of something else already inside the bag. It's made of wood. But we can't see more than that.

Kubo grabs his netsuke, slips it into his pocket, tightens his beetle robe, slings his bag over his shoulder.

He's getting ready to leave. But before he does, he kneels down by Sariatu to give her a kiss on the cheek. He notices:

A strand of her HAIR has fallen in front of her eyes.

Kubo gently reaches out and pushes it back into place. He gives her another small smile. An unspoken "good-bye."

Then he hurries out of the cave and onto --

EXT. MOUNTAIN PATH -- LOOKING DOWN ON THE OCEAN -- DAWN

Kubo scrambles down the rocky path with practiced ease, his big bag smacking against his hip as he goes.

We may notice: as the bag bumps into him, *it makes a dull, harmonic sound.* Like when you jostle a guitar.

EXT. FURTHER DOWN THE PATH -- BY THE OCEAN -- DAWN

Further down the path, we see dozens of FISHERMEN, checking traps and carrying their haul in back saddle BASKETS.

Many of them notice Kubo as he passes. They smile and elbow each other. A few of them call out GREETINGS to Kubo...

FISHERMAN

Good morning, paper boy!

SECOND FISHERMAN

Which story will it be today?

THIRD FISHERMAN

Will we finally learn the secret of the bronze mirror?

In response to these questions, Kubo just gives them a wave and a cryptic SHRUG, as if to say "*who knows?*"

The fishermen smile back with delight and anticipation. We can see they weren't really expecting an answer.

EXT. EVEN FURTHER DOWN THE PATH -- MOVING INLAND -- DAWN

As the path winds further inland, Kubo next passes THREE SAMURAI, practicing with their bow and arrows.

When the samurai look up and spot Kubo, *their serious faces suddenly break into goofy, exuberant GRINS.*

FIRST SAMURAI

Hey! It's the paper boy!

SECOND SAMURAI

What tale is it this time, boy? Is it the eight-forked serpent, coming back for more victims?

As Kubo gives another enigmatic shrug and hurries past them, the first samurai turns to the second.

FIRST SAMURAI

I thought the eight-forked serpent perished in the lightning storm.

SECOND SAMURAI

We don't know for sure. We only heard his eight horrid screams.

FIRST SAMURAI

Ah. That's true. You're good.

EXT. INLAND PATH -- OUTSIDE THE VILLAGE -- DAWN

Kubo passes more signs of VILLAGE LIFE now as all different types and classes of PEOPLE go about their morning routines.

A CHUBBY MERCHANT eating food off a cart that his SKINNY PARTNER is pulling, calls out to Kubo officiously...

CHUBBY MERCHANT

Paper boy! Yesterday I had questions. Lots of questions. So today, be sure you explain *everything.*

The merchant's partner turns to him, breathless and annoyed.

MERCHANT'S PARTNER

We're *supposed* to have questions. That's what makes it a good story.

CHUBBY MERCHANT

I prefer it when things are logical and make perfect sense.

A passing FISH MONGER happens to overhear their conversation as he shoves past, his net of fish slung over his shoulder.

FISH MONGER
Things don't always need to be
logical to make sense.

EXT. PICNIC AREA -- JUST OUTSIDE THE VILLAGE -- DAY

Just outside the village is a lovely, grassy stretch of land. Lots of FAMILIES out here, digging into big breakfasts.

As Kubo passes them, his gaze HOLDS for one longing moment on a pile of delicious-looking BUNS.

Which is why he doesn't see *something coming straight at him!*

TWO BACK-FLIPPING BOYS, TUMBLING INTO HIM, KNOCKING HIM DOWN!

These BOYS are older than Kubo and dressed identically. We will soon learn they are part of a trio of village ACROBATS.

They do not seem to like Kubo very much.

TALL ACROBAT
Watch where you're going, *one-eye!*

STOCKY ACROBAT
You ruined our rehearsal.

TALL ACROBAT
You best not begin your *story* until
we're done today. Otherwise...

The threat hangs there. But Kubo doesn't want any trouble. He hurriedly gathers up the origami that spilled from his bag during the collision and sets off again, passing --

A third acrobat. A *sweet-looking LITTLE GIRL* about Kubo's age. She's dressed in the same outfit as the two boys.

She gives Kubo a secret SMILE. Kubo smiles back as we --

CUT TO:

CLOSE ON: A BELL

We can presume this is the bell we heard earlier in the cave.

It's hanging from a BELL TOWER which we FOLLOW way, way down to the ground to see that we are now smack in the middle of --

EXT. MARKET SQUARE -- VILLAGE -- DAY

It's later in the morning and the market square is absolutely MOBBED with people:

- MERCHANTS, dozens of them, pitch their wares to VILLAGERS.
- FISHERMEN proudly hold up their fresh fish for sale.
- Village WOMEN shop, haggling for bargains.
- Village MEN gamble over elaborate tile games.

And lining the square is what could best be described as --

The feudal Japanese equivalent of the Venice Beach boardwalk.

It is a long row of BEGGARS and STREET PERFORMERS, competing for coins, handouts, and attention.

Among the jugglers and magicians, we spot the three ACROBATS, performing in time to a DRUM beaten by a FOURTH BOY.

Their tumbles and flips are SPECTACULAR. Finishing their routine, they collect coins tossed by the CROWD.

Just as the crowd starts to disperse, we hear the familiar VOICE of a child, rising above the din of the marketplace:

CHILD'S VOICE (O.S.)
IF YOU MUST BLINK, DO IT NOW!

With this one sentence, the entire dynamic of the marketplace CHANGES. Everybody STOPS what they're doing, turning to see:

KUBO!

He stands poised near a make-shift stage, holding that stringed shamisen instrument we saw in the prologue.

KUBO
*PAY CAREFUL ATTENTION TO EVERYTHING
YOU SEE AND HEAR. NO MATTER HOW
UNUSUAL IT MAY SEEM!*

The crowd now SURGES over excitedly to surround Kubo's stage!

The two boy acrobats seem mildly annoyed by all the commotion, but the little girl acrobat just looks excited.

She weaves through the straining crowd, using her gymnastic skills to tumble her way to the front of Kubo's audience.

KUBO
*AND PLEASE BE WARNED. IF YOU
 FIDGET. IF YOU LOOK AWAY. IF YOU
 CEASE TO BELIEVE ANY OF THIS, EVEN
 FOR AN INSTANT...*

And by this point, there's really no more need for Kubo to shout. The entire crowd has fallen STILL and SILENT.

KUBO
 (dramatic whisper)
Then our hero will surely perish!

He gestures to his make-shift stage, where we now notice:

A single origami figure of a SAMURAI, standing upright.

A delighted MURMUR from the crowd. They RECOGNIZE this origami figure, whispering excitedly. Things like...

VILLAGER #1
 It's Yukami! It's Yukami today!

VILLAGER #2
 I've been waiting weeks to find out
 what happened to him.

VILLAGER #3
 We all have! Those brain buzzards
 were almost upon him!

Kubo puts up a hand to silence them again as he continues.

KUBO
*His name is Yukami. He was a
 samurai, once. But now, he serves
 a new master... vengeance!*

And with just a subtle smile and nod, Kubo beckons his audience to join him in the final line of his prologue...

KUBO & THE ENTIRE CROWD
And that really is the least of it!

A moment as Kubo PAUSES dramatically. Standing there. The ultimate story-teller. In his element. Building suspense.

Until finally --

He plucks a single NOTE on his shamisen.

And mysteriously --

The origami samurai TIPS OVER, as if blown by an unseen wind.

KUBO
 You may recall, when we last
 visited Yukami the poison of the
 stinging shadows had taken hold.

As Kubo speaks these ominous words, he plucks a few more
 notes on his shamisen. And immediately --

HALF A DOZEN OF HIS ORIGAMI BIRDS FLUTTER UP OUT OF THE BAG!

In response to the notes Kubo is playing, the birds literally
 SOAR onto the stage and begin CIRCLING the supine samurai.

KUBO
 He could only lie there helplessly
 as the brain buzzards circled him,
 preparing to devour his memories.

And now the entire origami TABLEAU makes sense to us: it's
 BIRDS OF PREY, hovering around the dying body of the samurai.

We continue watching Kubo's story from the POV of the rapt
 audience, as if we were here in the middle of the crowd.

KUBO
 Until suddenly, the brain buzzards
 dispersed. With a hastiness that
 comes only from... great fear.

Still in the crowd, we fight for a better view as the birds
 of prey fly up and off the stage.

KUBO
 Leaving Yukami to consider: what
 sort of thing scares off a hungry
 brain buzzard?

Then we see it: that amazing CREATURE that Kubo's mother made
 now enters the stage, inspiring hushed AWE from the crowd.

KUBO
 A moment later, he got his answer.

And just as we're really starting to get into this tale --

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. KUBO'S STAGE -- QUICK SERIES OF DISSOLVES -- DAY

Like scanning through chapters on a DVD, we catch glimpses of
 various TABLEAUS from Kubo's story as he tells it. The story
 is clearly EPIC, involving the entire cast of FIGURES that
 Kubo was folding in the cave earlier.

The audience laughs... cries... even jumps back in fright.

It's obvious to us: *off stage*, Kubo is quiet and unassuming. But *on stage*, he is nothing less than a *master* story teller.

EXT. KUBO'S STAGE -- MARKET SQUARE -- LATER IN THE DAY

Yukami and that creature stand side by side as Kubo narrates.

KUBO

With their captors defeated, Yukumi turned to face his new companion.

"Now you must tell me who you are."

But even as he continues captivating the crowd, we notice: *Kubo sneaks a nervous glance up at the sinking sun.*

We get the sense he's suddenly looking to wind things down.

KUBO

"I'll tell you my story," the creature agreed. "I do believe *my* story will help you make sense of *your* story. For you see Yukami, I am actually... *your lost master!*"

The audience collectively GASPS, then hangs there, longing to hear more. A murmur of DISAPPOINTMENT as they now realize --

That's all they're going to get for today.

Suddenly, an ANGRY VOICE rises above the crowd...

ANGRY VILLAGER

Cheater! That's not an ending!

(then)

Why don't any of your stories ever have endings? They just keep going and going and going.

As he berates Kubo, the angry villager *picks up a rock and HURLS it at Yukami*, KNOCKING the figure off the stage.

But Kubo doesn't miss a beat. He simply smiles slyly and plucks another string on his shamisen while narrating...

KUBO

But before the creature could tell his tale, a new attack began!

Immediately, the Yukami figure gets up, refolds himself back to good health, and climbs back onto the stage.

KUBO

"My magical armor protects me,"
Yukami assured the creature. "But
your story will have to wait now."

As Yukami "talks," he turns to look into the crowd, POINTING
directly at the angry villager.

KUBO

"Because that ugly, stinky, rock-
throwing troll standing right over
there insists on interrupting us."

The angry villager looks embarrassed as people begin to
SNICKER at him. The little acrobat girl pipes up...

ACROBAT GIRL

Trolls can't help it. They're just
not that bright. Yukami should be
merciful.

Everyone is LAUGHING now. Even the angry villager.

EXT. MARKET SQUARE -- VILLAGE -- A FEW MINUTES LATER

Kubo is selling his origami to the crowd for a penny a pop.
We realize *this* is how he makes his money.

VILLAGERS

I'll take a silent sparrow./ I'd
like a fox-headed demon.

Kubo then notices the little acrobat girl, staring longingly.
It's pretty obvious she doesn't have money to buy a figure.

But as she starts to turn away...

KUBO

Wait!

Kubo makes his way over to her while refolding one of his
"brain buzzards" into a lovely PEACOCK. A gift.

The two of them share another little smile.

EXT. MARKET SQUARE -- VILLAGE -- LATE AFTERNOON

Purchasing a fresh stack of paper, Kubo looks up even more
NERVOUSLY at the setting sun.

He hurriedly uses more coins to buy RICE and TEA. We can
tell he really wants to get going.

But as he passes the BAKER, he can't resist stopping for a moment, staring at those same fresh BUNS he saw earlier.

KUBO
Six?

BAKER
Ten.

Kubo counts the coins he has remaining. He's only got...

KUBO
Eight?

BAKER
Done.

Kubo accepts the bun eagerly. Not wanting to wait, he prepares to take a BITE as he hurries out of the village. Until he hears --

OLD LADY'S VOICE (O.S.)
Paper boy!

Kubo TURNS to confront an old BEGGAR WOMAN, staring at Kubo.

BEGGAR WOMAN
*Some stories are so sad... nobody
wants to tell them.*

The implication is clear. She's old and hungry. Kubo takes pity, breaking off half of his bun and handing it to her.

EXT. MOUNTAIN PATH -- SUNSET

Kubo is SPRINTING back up the path to his cave. That same BELL we saw in the village begins echoing through the DUSK.

This only makes Kubo more anxious. He runs even faster.

INT. ENTRANCE -- CAVE -- EVENING

Just as the bell finishes chiming, Kubo arrives back at the entrance to the cave. He's breathing hard.

Sariatu still sits there. It's like she hasn't moved at all.

As Kubo gives her another kiss on the cheek, we see the moon's light REFLECTED in her eyes.

Suddenly, a bit of LUCIDITY comes into her face as she seems to "wake." She stares at Kubo's eye patch in surprise.

SARIATU

Kubo! What happened to your eye?

Kubo appears used to this and ignores the question as he helps his mother up and leads her further into the cave.

KUBO

Come. The audience was kind today.
There was enough left for a treat.

Kubo then pulls two items from his pocket:

His monkey charm and the other half of that bun he bought.
Kubo sets the charm down and then hands the bun to Sariatu.

Kubo watches as she devours it hungrily. It's clear that Kubo didn't even get a bite. As she chews, Sariatu admits.

SARIATU

I'm a little confused, Kubo. Happy
you're here. But confused.
(then)
I... don't quite remember my story.
Will you help me?

KUBO

Of course, Mother. I'll explain
everything over dinner.

SARIATU

You will?

KUBO

I always do.

INT. DINING AREA -- CAVE -- EVENING

Once again, Kubo and his mother eat rice and tea, kneeling in front of dining mats. The netsuke positioned between them.

Except now, Sariatu seems a little less hazy and out of it. She cocks her head, listening intently as Kubo explains...

KUBO

... I was just a baby back then.
You put me on your back. Then you
braved the waves of the Sudden Sea,
armed only with your song.

SARIATU

But *why* did I bring you here? Why
did I desire to leave the Farlands?

KUBO

You were running away from your father. He didn't approve of *my* father. Yukami.

SARIATU

(remembering)

Yes! Yukami was a great samurai. Leader of the beetle clan. But my love for him disgraced the moon and the stars.

We can tell Kubo doesn't really know what this means. Or even if any of this is true as he simply responds...

KUBO

That's how the story goes.

SARIATU

... Your grandfather was angry with me. Very, very angry.

As she says this, her gaze falls on Kubo's eye patch. Which is when we notice something strange:

The sheets of paper that Kubo purchased earlier RIPPLE ever so slightly, *forming the faintest of shapes*, then FLATTENING and going STILL once more.

Kubo sees this happen. He doesn't seem thrilled about it.

Then he rises and begins clearing the dishes. Sariatu still looks like she's trying to sort everything out in her mind.

SARIATU

Kubo? If you were just a baby, how is it you came to know this story?

KUBO

You told it to me, mother.

SARIATU

I did?

KUBO

Every night. Before I went to sleep. Now I tell it to you.

Sariatu considers this. Then, as Kubo reaches to take her empty bowl, she grabs his hand. Her face fills with EMOTION.

SARIATU

I would prefer to still be the one telling it.

KUBO
I would prefer to still be the one
hearing it.

A moment as Kubo's calm response registers with Sariatu. It lightens the mood. Makes her SMILE a bit. Kubo smiles back.

Sariatu lets go of Kubo's hands. He resumes cleaning up.

SARIATU
I still talk to him. Your father.
His spirit brings messages for you.
(thinking)
... What is it that he says?
(suddenly frightened)
He says you must never, ever leave
this cave!

But Kubo has heard all of this many times before. He smiles gently as he helps his mother through her memory.

KUBO
Until...

SARIATU
Until the village bell begins
beckoning the day.

KUBO
And at the end of the day...

SARIATU
You must be back inside the cave.
Before the village bell finishes
welcoming the night.

KUBO
And lastly and most importantly...

Enjoying this little game now, Sariatu grabs the netsuke charm and holds it up, speaking in a "monkey" voice.

SARIATU
Keep me with you at all times!
Promise me you'll do that, Kubo.

KUBO
Yes, Mr. Monkey. I promise I will.

Finished cleaning off the dishes, Kubo steps over to help his mother stand and walk over to her sleeping mat.

KUBO
Come now. It's time for sleep.

SARIATU

Today he was talking all about that armor, your father was.

And, for the first time, we see Kubo react with mild CURIOSITY to something his mother has said.

KUBO

The armor? Really? What did he say exactly?

SARIATU

You know the tale, Kubo. When I first met your father at The Temple Of The Mind, he was on a quest for lost magical armor.

(then)

It was a quest he never completed.

But now Sariatu has climbed into her sleeping mat and is busy getting comfortable. Kubo tries prompting her again.

KUBO

You told me there was a sword that was unbreakable. And a breastplate that was unbreachable...

SARIATU

And a helmet. A shiny helmet. And when you place it on your head, it gives you wisdom unimaginable.

Sariatu suddenly FLICKS Kubo right smack on his forehead with her fingers and laughs playfully. But Kubo remains serious.

KUBO

Did he say anything else?

However Sariatu is beginning to drift off now.

KUBO

Mother? Does he know where the armor is? Did he say where I might begin to look for it? *Mother?*

Sariatu turns back to Kubo. But she seems DISORIENTED again now. Once again, she stares at Kubo's eye patch in surprise.

SARIATU

Kubo? What happened to your eye?

Kubo's face falls. He knows what this means...

The conversation is over.

INT. CAVE -- NIGHT

The FULL MOON shines into the cave, providing just enough LIGHT to see that both Kubo and Sariatu are fast ASLEEP.

We listen to their quiet, steady BREATHING for a few moments. Until we suddenly begin to hear... *something else*.

It's a SKITTERING sound. Like the movement of little feet.

And now we see: the sound is being made by a tiny FIGURE, racing through the shadows of the cave.

Kubo's eye OPENS, just as the figure runs across his chest!

It's the YUKAMI ORIGAMI! The one he used in his story.

The paper samurai is moving around the room, seemingly on its own accord.

But Kubo actually seems more annoyed than surprised by this as he whispers...

KUBO
Mother! Mother, wake up!

Over on her mat, Sariatu tosses and mumbles in her sleep, not waking up. She is clearly in the midst of an intense DREAM.

KUBO
(louder)
You're dreaming again!

Just as Kubo says this --

THAT STACK OF PAPER HE BOUGHT EARLIER EXPLODES INTO THE AIR!

As Sariatu continues dreaming, *the pieces of paper begin FOLDING THEMSELVES into origami shapes and figures!*

Sariatu now RISES from her bed and shuffles to the center of the cave with her eyes still CLOSED, standing by the paper.

We realize she is SLEEPWALKING.

Kubo immediately jumps out of bed and runs over to her, taking her arm gently.

KUBO
Mother, you need to go back to bed.

SARIATU
(mumbling)
Kubo? Kubo, my son?

KUBO
Yes, it's me.

But then he realizes: Sariatu is not speaking to *him*. She is actually *still* dreaming, talking in her sleep.

SARIATU
*Tonight, your father and I are
taking you on an evening picnic.*

Hearing this, Kubo's eye WIDEN with sudden URGENCY.

KUBO
No mother! Not that dream!

But it is too late, as Kubo now WHIRLS AROUND to SEE:

Behind him, all those pieces of paper have just finished twisting and folding themselves into an AMAZING TABLEAU!

It's a breath-taking origami rendering of a MOONLIGHT PICNIC.

Underneath a full moon and shimmering stars, the YUKAMI figure sits next to an origami WOMAN with long, long hair.

The paper woman bounces a SMILING BABY on her lap as she points up at the shimmering stars.

SARIATU
(talking in her sleep)
*That's your family up there, Kubo.
Aren't they beautiful?*

Meanwhile, Kubo frantically tries to shake Sariatu awake.

KUBO
Mother, wake up now!

Back in the tableau, the paper woman turns to the samurai.

It's clear to us now that sleepwalking Sariatu is speaking as the paper woman in the dream tableau when she says...

SARIATU
*Darling, may I share your robes?
There's a sudden chill in the air.*

KUBO
No!!!

But it's too late. In an instant, the paper tableau has gone from beatific to HORRIFIC as:

THREE terrible, wraith-like PAPER CREATURES swoop down and ATTACK paper Yukami.

SARIATU

*Yukami, it's my sisters! They've
come for him!*

Meanwhile, the paper moon rapidly REFOLDS itself, turning into the most freakish and hideous CREATURE imaginable!

This dragon-like monster flies down to GRAB the paper baby, using its talons to literally --

POKE A HOLE IN THE BABY'S PAPER HEAD, RIGHT WHERE HIS EYE IS!

Kubo hugs his mother tightly as she screams and suffers in her sleep. Then suddenly, he is struck with an idea.

Still hugging his mother he SHOUTS up the creature...

KUBO

YOU HEARD HER! LET HIM GO!

Which is exactly what the dragon creature does.

Before turning to STARE directly at Kubo!

And now, Kubo is genuinely TERRIFIED. He backs away as the sinister paper beast floats towards him, grinning horribly.

Until the first RAYS of the dawn sun push into the cave.

As the light ILLUMINATES the terrible monster, it immediately UNFOLDS and drops lifeless to the ground.

One by one, all the other creations do the same.

Meanwhile, Sariatu shuffles back to her mat and lies down again.

Kubo is left staring at that same MESS of strewn paper, like what we saw him cleaning up when we first met him.

Now we understand exactly how those papers got there.

FADE TO:

EXT. MARKET SQUARE -- VILLAGE -- DAY

Panning down from that same RINGING BELL, we see that the market square looks a bit different today.

It has been TIDIED UP and DECORATED with colorful JAPANESE LAMPS. The villagers are dressed in crisp, clean clothes.

There is ACTIVITY going on, but not like yesterday. Nobody is buying or selling or gambling.

Instead --

The majority of the women are participating in an elaborate LINE DANCE made up of sweeping movements and subtle gestures.

Most of the men are decorating and engraving BEAUTIFUL ALTARS made from precious metals and shimmering stones.

Kubo stands watching all of this. He is not thrilled.

OLD LADY'S VOICE (O.S.)

Paper boy!

Kubo turns to see that same beggar woman. She seems to be in a good mood now and has even made an effort to clean up.

BEGGAR WOMAN

Where is your smile today? Must I beg for that too?

KUBO

I forgot it was the festival.

BEGGAR WOMAN

What a wonderful thing to forget. Because now you get to remember.

KUBO

I would have saved my coins yesterday. I still need to buy rice and tea.

BEGGAR WOMAN

The Festival Of The Floating Ghosts is not a day for coin or concern.

KUBO

Doesn't that depend on the concern?

BEGGAR WOMAN

Today we use altars and lamps to speak to the loved ones that have left us behind. We listen to their tales. And guide their safe return to the blissful pure land.

(leans towards Kubo)

That makes this the most sacred of holidays.

Kubo motions to all the elaborate ALTARS and ornate LAMPS displayed around the market square.

KUBO

The thing I've noticed about holidays? They can get expensive.

BEGGAR WOMAN

To make a lamp you just need paper. You have plenty of that.

She points to his bag of paper. Then she reaches into a pile of blankets, pulling out: a *small, simple wooden ALTAR*.

BEGGAR WOMAN

And now you have an altar to hang your lamp from.

Kubo's eyes go WIDE as she offers him the wooden altar.

KUBO

Thank you. But I can't accept this. It's yours.

BEGGAR WOMAN

I already used it first thing this morning. It worked quite well.

In spite of himself, Kubo finds himself leaning in and listening attentively as the beggar woman claims...

BEGGAR WOMAN

My husband told me he'd be waiting for me in the blissful pure land.

KUBO

His ghost really *spoke* to you?

BEGGAR WOMAN

His voice was as clear and loud as the one you use for your stories.

Kubo's eyes WIDEN more as she says this. In the background, that dance concludes to the CHEERS of the spectators.

BEGGAR WOMAN

Now take the altar, paper boy.
(holds it out to him)
There must be someone who has left you behind. Someone who you would want very much to talk to.

And off Kubo accepting the altar, knowing exactly who it is that he wants to talk to --

EXT. PATH THROUGH THE WOODS -- DAY

Carrying his bag and altar, Kubo hikes down a WINDING PATH through the woods, leading to a --

Beautiful CEMETERY on the edge of a river.

Filled with robust plants and colorful FLOWERS, there's nothing creepy about this place. It's a place of peace.

Dozens of FAMILIES are here, setting up lamps and altars. A nearby PATIENT DAD is teaching his two young CHILDREN...

PATIENT DAD

Hang the lamp there. Directly
above the offering. Very good.

Kubo finds some space and dumps the origami out of his bag.

He begins re-fashioning all the paper into a LAMP as that patient dad continues discussing the ritual with his family.

YOUNG BOY

What do we do next, Daddy?

PATIENT DAD

Now we pray. We ask her spirit to
honor us with its light.

YOUNG GIRL

(loudly)
Grandma, will you please honor...

PATIENT DAD

(smiling)
Shhh. Softly.

Meanwhile, Kubo finishes building his lamp. It's simple but LOVELY. He uses a thread from his robe as the wick.

Unsure what to do next, he sneaks a look over at the layout of the patient dad's altar and copies it as best he can.

The one difference: he doesn't have any FOOD for an offering.

Reaching into the pocket of his robe, he manages to find a few CRUMBS from the bun he stored in there the other day.

That's going to have to do.

Then, copying that nearby family, he gets on his knees and begins to pray, speaking quietly under his breath...

KUBO
Hello, father. How are you?

Kubo thinks about that opening for a moment. Doesn't like it. Decides to start over.

KUBO
Father? It's your son, Kubo. But
you probably figured that out from
my...
(points to his patch)
Lack of certain... gifts.

Kubo smiles to indicate he is joking. But then decides he didn't like this direction either. He starts over once more.

KUBO
Father, I'm worried about mother.
With every day that goes by, she
drifts further and further away.

Kubo is momentarily distracted by the voice of that young girl, asking her patient dad...

VERY YOUNG GIRL
Why isn't Grandma coming yet?

PATIENT DAD
Just keep praying. Try to use all
of your heart and soul.

Hearing the patient dad's word, Kubo turns back to his altar.

KUBO
And I have no idea how to bring her
back. No matter what I say or do.

Wrestling with the helplessness he has just admitted to, Kubo decides to change the subject. He points to his robe.

KUBO
I wear this every day. Mother says
it was yours. That you were a
great leader... who died protecting
me. Saving my other eye.
(after a moment)
If that tale is true, thank you.
One is better than none, right?

He smiles to indicate he is joking again. But then looks embarrassed. Maybe that was inappropriate.

He continues...

KUBO

But I could use your help again.

(then)

If the armor mother speaks of really exists... it would be worth a great deal. We could perhaps leave that cold cave. We could have fish and buns to keep the rice company in our bellies.

Kubo lowers his voice, hardly daring to speak this next part.

KUBO

And perhaps if mother were to put on that helmet, all her wisdom, all her memories would come back to her. She'd be... *her* again.

But suddenly, Kubo's prayer is interrupted by the excited shouts of those two young children.

YOUNG GIRL

She's *here*! Grandma is *here*! She says she's watching over us. She likes it when we laugh.

Distracted by this, Kubo looks over at the family to see: *their lamp LIGHTING UP, the wick inside bursting into FLAME!*

PATIENT DAD

Now it's time for the final part.
Do you remember what we do?

YOUNG BOY

We have to help her get back to the blissful pure land.

The family then brings their lit lantern down to the river, placing it in the water and watching it float out to sea.

Meanwhile, Kubo turns back to his own altar.

KUBO

So if you were to visit me today.
If you were to light my lamp and tell me where that armor is. Then I could find it. I could help our family. And I could finally give your quest... a happy ending.

Having made his pitch, Kubo stares at the lamp invitingly.
But still nothing happens.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. KUBO'S ALTAR -- QUICK SERIES OF SHOTS -- DAY

Just like those QUICK CUTS of Kubo's stage back when he was telling his story, we do the same thing now with his altar.

Unfortunately, NOTHING is happening. The lamp stays UNLIT. Kubo just grows more impatient.

EXT. KUBO'S ALTAR -- LATER IN THE DAY

The cemetery is practically deserted now. Behind Kubo in the river, dozens of LIT LAMPS are slowly floating out to sea.

Sneaking a nervous glance at the sinking sun, Kubo stares pleadingly at that still UNLIT lamp.

And maybe he's also getting the slightest bit ANNOYED.

KUBO

Okay, if you're feeling a little shy, you don't have to talk.

(an idea)

I hear you commanded many men. Why don't you send one of them to help me find the armor? That wouldn't be so hard, right?

Kubo stares at the lamp for a few more moments. Until --

A HAND touches his shoulder!

Kubo jumps up, startled. He was so focussed on his altar that this took him completely by surprise. But it is only --

The little girl acrobat. She holds out a cup of tea to Kubo.

GIRL ACROBAT

Perhaps he is thirsty. He would like some tea to wash down...

(re: crumbs)

The bun.

She smiles at Kubo. She's not mocking him. Just making light of a sad situation. Kubo forces a smile back.

KUBO

Yes. That must be it. What ghost doesn't love a nice cup of tea?

But just as he is accepting the cup from her...

ANGRY VOICE (O.S.)

Riyoko! How dare you!

It's the two boy acrobats, hurrying towards them furiously.
They carry an altar, two lamps, and a basket of food scraps.

STOCKY ACROBAT

That tea is for our parents.

TALL ACROBAT

(accusing Kubo)

First you take the food from *our*
mouths and now you take it from our
dead parents.

KUBO

You are so dramatic. I don't *take*
food from you. We both earn coins.
And I always let you finish your
flips before I tell my tales.

STOCKY ACROBAT

We earned twice as much before you
came along, one-eye. You and your
stories with no endings.

KUBO

What *is* an ending, really?
(off their blank looks)
Anyway, I was just leaving. My
father tells me he's well. Up in
ghostland. So I'll be on my way.

TALL ACROBAT

LIAR!

He swipes out his arm, knocking the tea out of Kubo's hand.

TALL ACROBAT

Your lamp is unlit. You weren't
talking to anyone. You're a liar.

STOCKY ACROBAT

No surprise. That's what he does
all day. Tells lies for money.

GIRL ACROBAT

You're wrong, Toshi! Stories
aren't lies!

TALL ACROBAT

Oh no? What are they then?

KUBO

(thinks; then)

They're *truths*... that I make up.

STOCKY ACROBAT

That's called a lie, one eye! I wonder what *else* he lies about?

TALL ACROBAT

(re: altar)

Maybe his missing father isn't even really dead. Maybe *that's* a lie that his crazy mother told *him*.

STOCKY ACROBAT

How do we even know he *has* one eye? He could be lying about that too.

TALL ACROBAT

Good point. If people feel sorry for him, they give him more coins.

(then)

Hold him still. Let's find out.

And before Kubo can react, the stocky acrobat is GRABBING him around the waste tightly.

Riyoko screams for them to stop, but the tall acrobat just pushes her aside as he steps closer to Kubo.

TALL ACROBAT

Okay, one-eye. It's time for us to know: are you a liar or a freak?

Kubo flails and struggles as the tall acrobat moves in and --

RIPS OFF KUBO'S EYE PATCH!!!

We do not see what the tall acrobat sees.

We just watch his mocking smile change to an expression of SURPRISE and REVULSION and PITY.

And finally, SHAME.

After a few moments of horrible SILENCE...

TALL ACROBAT

(quietly)

Come Toshi. Riyoko. We'll find another place to set up our altar.

The two brothers grab their sister, pulling her away.

Kubo falls to the ground, furious and humiliated, next to his father's still unlit lamp.

He lies there face down. Not moving.

But then...

VOICE (O.S.)

Kubo?

It's Riyoko, the little girl acrobat. She has pulled away from her brothers and run back to Kubo's side.

KUBO

(not facing her)

Go away.

Riyoko spots Kubo's patch and offers it back to him.

RIYOKO

Here. It's not damaged.

She keeps her eyes down as Kubo ties the patch back around his head. But he still won't face her as he whispers...

KUBO

Just please leave me alone.

RIYOKO

Are you crying?

(no response from Kubo)

It's okay if you are. It doesn't mean I can't stay here with you.

KUBO

(face still averted)

I'm not crying.

RIYOKO

Your stories make me cry sometimes. Did you know that? And not just me. A lot of people. Grown-ups. Samurai. Even my brothers. And not always because the stories are sad. Sometimes people cry just because they're... beautiful.

But Riyoko is suddenly interrupted as Kubo whirls to face her. His face is completely DRY and filled with FURY!

KUBO

*I'M NOT CRYING! I NEVER CRY! NOW
GET AWAY FROM ME!!!*

Frightened by Kubo's intensity, Riyoko backs away and runs off. And just as she disappears into the woods --

The village BELL begins to RING, welcoming the night.

Mumbling to himself angrily, Kubo gathers up the rest of his things. Looks like he's getting ready to SPRINT home.

Until he STOPS. Just stops.

And we see it on his face: he's *done* listening to this stupid, arbitrary rule about the bell.

Coming to a decision, he grabs his unlit lamp and CRUMPLES it up, tossing it angrily into the river.

The bell keeps ringing, but Kubo just stands there defiantly.

He watches as his ruined lamp floats towards the lovely formation of lit ones, further ahead in the water.

But as the bell continues, Kubo has a sudden change of heart.

He hurries over and kneels down by the river bed, fishing his lamp out of the water, trying to REPAIR it as best he can.

Intent on fixing the crumpled lamp, he barely notices that *the bell has finished chiming*. Until --

Something strange happens.

Further down the river, every single one of those lit lamps GO OUT ALL AT ONCE, extinguished in a quick, silent INSTANT!

Like after you blow out birthday candles, SMOKE pours from the lamps, joining a sudden FOG rolling across the water.

This once cheerful place has turned dark and EERIE.

WHISPERED VOICES (O.S.)

Kuuuuuuuboooooooooooo!

Kubo gazes around, trying to figure out who is calling his name. That's when he sees, on the other side of the river:

A lone WOMAN clad in flowing ROBES, billowing in the breeze.

She wears a wide-brimmed peasant's hat with long, jet-black hair (like Sariatu's in the prologue) flowing under it. The brim of the hat is pulled LOW so we *cannot see her face*.

She's also holding a long, wooden PIPE. She is ECLIPSE.

She whispers to Kubo in a calm, eerily melodic voice that seems to come from several different directions.

ECLIPSE

Little boy. What happened to your eye?

Kubo takes a step backwards, sensing something is very, very wrong here. He tries to play it cool.

KUBO

My eye?

He puts his hands to his face and feels his patch, reacting in mock horror, as if he were just noticing it.

KUBO

Huh! I wonder where it went!

He LAUGHS a bit to indicate he is joking.

After a moment, the strange woman whose face we cannot see LAUGHS as well. It's a high, horrific nightmare of a GIGGLE.

Just like her speech, the woman's giggle also seems to come from several directions. And now we understand why as:

TWO MORE WOMEN, dressed exactly like the first, emerge from the shadows... also GIGGLING.

One wears a NECKLACE of black beads. The other holds a WALKING STICK. We cannot see their faces either.

We will call this trio of women --

THE THREE SISTERS

(as one voice)

*You are brave, Kubo. Soooo brave.
You take after your grandfather.*

Kubo takes another step back. But can't resist asking...

KUBO

Who are you? How do you know my name?

THE THREE SISTERS

Why, we're your family, Kubo. Your mother's sisters.

Kubo's eyes WIDEN as he absorbs this information.

THE THREE SISTERS

*It is so lovely to meet you, Kubo.
(then)
Face to face.*

As they say these last three words, they raise their heads in unison and look up at Kubo to reveal:

EACH OF THEIR FACES IS COVERED BY A TERRIFYING "NOH" MASK!!!

Kubo stands frozen and horrified as all three of them begin --

GLIDING LIKE THE MIST ACROSS THE RIVER TOWARDS HIM!

THE THREE SISTERS

*Now come, Kubo. Give your aunties
a hug. We have a present for you.*

As they say this, Eclipse reaches into her robes and pulls out her own unlit PAPER LAMP.

THE THREE SISTERS

*Isn't it lovely? It can guide your
soul to the pure land, Kubo.*

This is the last straw for Kubo. Finding his legs, he turns and SPRINTS up the path, dashing towards the village.

The three sisters GIGGLE again as they watch him bolt off.

Then Eclipse brings that ridiculously long pipe up to the mouth hole of her mask and takes a deep PUFF.

The smoke she exhales begins forming into SHAPES that are large and horrible and very much ALIVE.

We shall call them the DEMONS OF THE PIPE.

EXT. PATH THROUGH THE WOODS -- NIGHT

Kubo tears up the path leading back to the village, crying...

KUBO

HELP! SOMEBODY HELP! MONSTERS ARE
CHASING ME! THIS ISN'T A STORY!

Finally, arriving at the village he enters the market. But just as he finds his breath and prepares to yell out again --

The SHRIEKING EXPLOSION OF FIREWORKS drowns out his cries!

Celebrating the conclusion of the festival, nobody can hear Kubo's SHOUTS of warning.

And then it is too late.

As Kubo races through the market:

Several of the demons break off from their pursuit of him, moving towards the celebrating villagers!

We see the terrified looks on the villager's faces as the demons close in, launching projectiles of SMOKE and FIRE.

EXT. INLAND PATH -- JUST OUTSIDE THE VILLAGE -- NIGHT

Racing up the path towards his cave, Kubo stops short as --

TWO FIGURES STEP OUT TO BLOCK HIS PATH!

It's those samurai who called to him the other morning.

FIRST SAMURAI

What's wrong, paper boy?

SECOND SAMURAI

Is it the eight-forked serpent,
back for revenge?

But his amused smile quickly FADES as he sees what's behind Kubo. The samurai quickly draw their swords and bows.

FIRST SAMURAI

Get behind us. We'll keep you...

Before he can even say the word, "safe..."

His samurai armor goes CRUMBLING to the ground, no longer supported by his body.

The FIERY PROJECTILES of the pipe demons have turned both of the samurai to ASH in the blink of an eye.

KUBO

NO!!!!

But Kubo is already being surrounded by the demons. Through their terrible, translucent bodies he catches sight of --

His three masked aunts, taking their sweet time as they glide up the path towards Kubo.

THE THREE SISTERS

*No reason to be afraid, Kubo. We
just need your other eye for our
father to admire.*

If this weren't bad enough, they then add...

THE THREE SISTERS

*And perhaps your ears and nose for
our children to play with.*

And just as all seems lost --

A HAND out of nowhere PULLS Kubo's shamisen out of his bag and PLUCKS a single NOTE!

As the note reverberates, the demons immediately FREEZE in place and SHATTER into a billion pieces.

Kubo turns to see the person who did this was:

SARIATU, HIS MOTHER!!!

SARIATU
KUBO, TAKE FLIGHT!

Shouting these words, she shoves the shamisen back into his bag and SMACKS the beetle crest on the back of his robe.

And the moment she does this --

TWO FLAPPING BEETLE WINGS EMERGE FROM THE ROBE'S FOLDS!

The wings pump furiously, LIFTING Kubo up, up into the air!

Unsure what's happening, Kubo struggles to grab hold of Sariatu. But the strength of the wings is YANKING him away.

KUBO
MOTHER!!!!

SARIATU
KUBO, YOU MUST FIND THE ARMOR!!!
IT'S YOUR ONLY CHANCE!

Kubo makes a final effort to clutch his mother, accidentally tearing out a few strands of her HAIR as he rises into --

EXT. SKY ABOVE THE VILLAGE -- NIGHT

With the flapping wings flying him away from the village and towards the OCEAN, Kubo gets a final look at:

His mother squaring off against the three masked aunts.

They move to surround her, pulling BLADED CHAINS from their robes and swinging them menacingly.

Further down the path, Kubo can see the remains of his village, BURNING COMPLETELY TO THE GROUND.

But as Kubo continues rising into the air and moving over the ocean, his vision is suddenly blocked by *HIS OWN ROBE!*

It's WRAPPING itself around him, COCOONING his body and face.

The last thing it COVERS is his one good eye, taking us to --

BLACK.

HOLDING here in the silent darkness for a moment.

Until we notice a small sound. A rising WIND creeping from a whisper to a WAIL as we slowly --

FADE IN.

Once again, coming face to face with:

A MONKEY.

A serious monkey. Staring right at us. FIXED expression.

But then suddenly, *the monkey BLINKS!*

And we immediately realize: this is not another "netsuke" charm but an actual, living and breathing 4 foot tall MONKEY!

The monkey SHOUTS at us over the wind in a FEMALE VOICE...

MONKEY
... CAN YOU HEAR ME, KUBO? I SAID,
YOUR MOTHER IS DEAD! YOUR VILLAGE
IS GONE! BURNED TO THE GROUND!

Having just woken up, Kubo stares up at the monkey. Then looks around, dazed and disoriented. He's in the middle of --

EXT. SNOW-COVERED TERRAIN -- BLIZZARD

As he slowly sits up, Kubo spies his beetle robe lying in the snow a few yards away. It is now TORN and TATTERED.

The monkey continues shouting at him...

MONKEY
WE CRASH LANDED HERE. YOUR ENEMIES
AREN'T FAR BEHIND! THEY WILL KILL
ME AND CARVE OUT YOUR OTHER EYE!

As Monkey delivers this rather glum state of the union, Kubo happens to look down and realizes:

He is actually sitting on a giant sheet of snow-covered ICE.

Through the ice, he can see a family of WHALES swimming under the water. He STARES blankly at them as Monkey continues...

MONKEY
OUR ONLY HOPE IS TO FIND THE ARMOR.
(then)
WE WILL ALMOST CERTAINLY FAIL.

Monkey watches Kubo as the boy looks up from the three whales. He still seems very disoriented and out of it.

MONKEY
ARE YOU GOING TO CRY? DO YOU NEED
TO CRY? TELL ME NOW IF YOU DO.

Kubo stares back at Monkey. Then shakes his head. He is NOT going to cry.

This appears to please Monkey.

MONKEY
GOOD. THAT IS GOOD. THAT WILL
SAVE US TIME.

Monkey turns, offering Kubo her back.

MONKEY
NOW GET ON. WE MUST SEARCH FOR
SHELTER, BEFORE THE MOON COMES.

Kubo slowly gathers up the remains of his beetle robe and puts it back on. Then he climbs onto Monkey's back.

And as Monkey RACES through the snow with Kubo on her back --

We PULL BACK WIDER and WIDER and still WIDER to REVEAL:

Shelter might not be so easy to find.

Because all we can see is ICE and SNOW for hundreds of miles in every direction.

EXT. SNOWY-COVERED TERRAIN -- DUSK

Both Monkey and Kubo stand here in the snow, STARING at something we don't yet see.

MONKEY
Once we're inside, you might be
tempted to complain about the odor.

And now we SEE what Monkey is referring to:

A GIANT, FROZEN WHALE CARCASS, LYING THERE ON THE ICE!

MONKEY
Keep in mind, my sense of smell is
ten times stronger than yours.

And with that, Monkey MUSCLES OPEN the mouth of the whale, motioning for Kubo to follow her inside.

INT. WHALE CARCASS -- SNOWY TERRAIN -- NIGHT

Kubo looks less than thrilled as he huddles amidst BLUBBERY INNARDS, holding his nose from the STENCH. It's clear:

Monkey & Kubo have made camp inside the belly of the whale!

Kubo watches Monkey, who is gathering up LUMINESCENT ALGAE and fashioning a glowing LANTERN to explore the whale.

After a few moments, she turns and spots Kubo watching her.

MONKEY

I said, go to sleep.

KUBO

I have questions.

MONKEY

Questions can wait. Sleep.

KUBO

I can't sleep if I have questions.

MONKEY

That's a shame. Because if you don't sleep you'll be tired.

As she talks, Monkey snaps off a BONE FRAGMENT from the whale's giant SPINE, testing it as a spear-like WEAPON.

MONKEY

If you're tired, you'll be slow.
If you're slow, they'll catch you.
Then you'll be dead. Sleep or die.

On that note, Kubo reluctantly closes his eye. Tries to get comfortable. He can't. He opens his eye again to see:

Monkey staring at him with a severe expression.

KUBO

I want to. My brain won't let me.

Clearly annoyed by this, Monkey finally relents.

MONKEY

Okay. You have three questions.

KUBO

I believe I have more.

MONKEY

I'll answer three.

KUBO
Why only three?

MONKEY
Is that your first question?

KUBO
No.

MONKEY
I didn't think so.

KUBO
You're kind of a mean monkey,
aren't you?

MONKEY
Yes. Yes, I am.
(then)
That was your first question. You
have two left now.

KUBO
Where did you come from, anyway?

MONKEY
You don't recognize me, Kubo?

Monkey suddenly FIXES her gaze and stares straight ahead with
a very SERIOUS expression. *Just like that Netsuke charm.*

MONKEY
All these years you had to keep me
in your pocket. Now you know why.

KUBO
But you were a wooden charm.
(gesturing)
You were this big.

MONKEY
Your mother used her last bit of
magic to bring me to life. I grew.

KUBO
I called that charm, *Mr. Monkey.*

MONKEY
If I were alive at that point, I
might have found that insulting.

KUBO
But why did she...? I mean how did
you...? I mean...?

MONKEY
(cuts him off)
You're out of questions now anyway,
so just listen.

As Monkey talks, she steps over to Kubo and begins EXAMINING the sleeve of his robes. Kubo isn't sure what she's doing.

MONKEY
Your mother knew this time would
come. When your family found you
again. She took precautions.

Monkey moves to examine Kubo's other sleeve now. It's as if she is looking for something small and difficult to see.

MONKEY
She blessed your robes to fly you
here. To the Farlands. This is
where the armor can be found.

And now, Monkey FINDS what she was looking for: STUCK to the sleeve of Kubo's robe is a single *LONG, BLACK HAIR*.

MONKEY
She blessed me to come to life and
help you find it. But right now, I
have no idea where to look.

Monkey begins twisting the hair, FOLDING and BRAIDING it as she concludes...

MONKEY
Those are your answers. The ones
you need right now. To sleep.

KUBO
(re: the hair)
I pulled that from her head.
Before I flew. I didn't mean to.

MONKEY
She was probably glad you did.

Monkey now holds up the hair to reveal: *she has woven it into a simple, lovely BRACELET*.

As she fastens the bracelet around Kubo's wrist, she warns...

MONKEY
Now sleep. Or die.

Kubo closes his eye. Tries to get comfortable. Only now, when Kubo isn't looking, does Monkey's expression SOFTEN.

INT. WHALE CARCASS -- SNOWY TERRAIN -- DAWN

Kubo's eye blinks open to see the first strains of SUNLIGHT, feebling in through what is clearly the whale's BLOW HOLE.

MONKEY (O.S.)
... Must have been quite a dream.

Kubo looks over to see Monkey standing over a small COOKING FIRE with a conch shell "pot" balanced on top of it.

But she is pointing at SOMETHING ELSE, standing near Kubo:

It's a 12 inch, more detailed version of that YUKAMI ORIGAMI, fashioned out of several sheets of paper, folded together!

MONKEY
You were talking in your sleep.
The paper flew out of your bag.
(re: Yukami origami)
Folded itself into... him.

Still a bit puzzled, Kubo steps over to inspect the origami.

KUBO
Back home in the cave, it was my
mother's dreams that did this.

Kubo reaches out to touch the origami. But as he does, Yukami PARRIES Kubo's hand, BLOCKING it with his paper sword.

The figure then marches away from Kubo somewhat huffily.

KUBO
And the paper always unfolded
itself by morning.

They both look over as the Yukami origami climbs on top of Kubo's bag and strikes a regal pose, POINTING his sword.

After a moment, Monkey feels the need to quietly state...

MONKEY
You're not at home anymore, Kubo.

Monkey then dips two smaller shells into the "pot," serving one to Kubo and sitting down next to him.

MONKEY
(re: conch)
Drink.

Kubo holds the conch to his lips. Hesitates.

MONKEY

Drink. We can't stay here all day.

KUBO

It's still too hot.

A little annoyed, Monkey grabs the conch from Kubo. Blows on it pointedly. Hands it back to him.

MONKEY

Now *drink*.

Kubo takes a small sip. We can tell he doesn't love it.

KUBO

What is this, anyway?

MONKEY

Soup.

KUBO

What kind of soup?

MONKEY

Whale.

Kubo knows Monkey is getting very annoyed with him now, which is why he can't resist asking her...

KUBO

What's in it?

MONKEY

... Pork.

Kubo takes another sip of the soup, SLURPING it just a bit.

Hearing the slurp, Monkey gives Kubo a peeved look.

KUBO

Sorry.

Kubo takes another sip, deliberately SLURPING louder.

Monkey full on GLARES at him now.

KUBO

I think it's just a noisy soup.

MONKEY

Well tell the "soup" to be quiet.
Otherwise the "soup" might not like
what happens to it.

KUBO
I'll try. Sometimes soup can't be
reasoned with.

Kubo raises the conch to his mouth as Monkey STARES him down.
Is Kubo going to risk SLURPING it again?

Locking eyes with Monkey, Kubo brings the conch *closer and closer to his lips*.

However, just as he is pursing his lips to SLURP again --

A SUDDEN LURCHING MOVEMENT SHAKES THE ENTIRE WHALE!

The soup goes FLYING out of Kubo's conch, splattering across Monkey's lap as the lurching movements continue.

KUBO
What is it? What's happening?

Before Monkey can answer, every loose item -- conch shells, backpack, Kubo, and Monkey -- begins SLIDING down towards the "belly" area of the whale:

We realize the whale they are inside is TILTING DIAGONALLY!

MONKEY
We're dropping into the ice!

As Kubo slides past her she GRABS him, reaching out and GRIPPING onto one of the whale's ribs with her free hand.

Seeing his backpack sliding past him, Kubo GRABS that with *his* free hand, barely saving the shamisen inside.

Monkey hesitates now as the whale rapidly tilts to VERTICAL. She's not sure what to do next.

Then Kubo spots...

KUBO
The blowhole!

Monkey immediately understands what Kubo means. They can ESCAPE the whale through the blow hole.

Using her feet and one free arm, Monkey begins climbing up the ladder of ribs towards that open blow hole.

EXT. WHALE CARCASS -- SNOWY TERRAIN -- DAY

We're watching from OUTSIDE the whale now as its body SINKS into the ice, which is rapidly BREAKING all around it.

As the entire whale SINKS, the blow hole lowers closer and closer to that freezing water. No sign of Kubo or Monkey.

Then finally, a simian hand SHOOTS UP out of the blow hole! Monkey EMERGES, still holding onto Kubo with one hand.

She gives Kubo a YANK. But something is IMPEDING him. It's his shamisen, sticking out of the bag at an odd angle.

Kubo shifts the bag, allowing Monkey to pull him CLEAR.

They then both LEAP off the whale, racing away as the ground SPLITS and CRUMBLES all around them.

"Lilly-padding" from ice patch to ice patch, they finally make it to thicker and more solid ground.

As they both stand there catching their breath, suddenly --

A MASSIVE SEA MONSTER'S JAWS BREACH THE SURROUNDING ICE, SWALLOWING THAT WHALE IN ONE GULP, THEN SUBMERGING AGAIN!

Kubo and Monkey watch this with wide eyes.

A beat later, Yukami origami pokes his head out of Kubo's bag. He yawns and stretches. Like he was in there sleeping through all of this. Then he climbs out of the bag and --

Strikes that same REGAL POSE again, extending his sword and POINTING out towards the horizon.

MONKEY

Any idea why he keeps doing that?

Kubo considers these words as he watches Yukami Origami, continuing to pose and point off into the distance.

KUBO

You said I was talking in my sleep when the paper formed him. What was I saying?

MONKEY

You were speaking to your father. You asked him for his help finding the armor.

Struck by an impulse, Kubo suddenly reaches forward and TURNS the bag Yukami Origami is standing on slightly, so that --

The figure is now pointing his sword in a NEW DIRECTION.

Yukami gives Kubo the origami equivalent of an exasperated glance. Then the origami figure does something rather odd:

He CORRECTS himself like a COMPASS, turning so he can keep pointing his sword in the direction he was initially facing.

He then GESTURES impatiently with his sword and looks at Kubo and Monkey as if to say, "Come on already, let's go!"

Kubo and Monkey share a glance, realizing what this means.

KUBO

I guess this is how my father
answered me.

As Yukami continues POINTING emphatically with his sword --

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. GRASSY FIELDS -- MID DAY

Yukami remains perched on Kubo's bag, still pointing the way.

Behind him we see the last of the ice and snow has tapered into the GREEN FIELDS Kubo & Monkey are hiking through.

An odd, lovely CREATURE, like a cross between a PEACOCK and a HUMMING BIRD, flies overhead.

It chirps out a sweet MELODY.

Holding his shamisen, Kubo lags behind Monkey. He softly plucks the instrument's strings as he walks.

We quickly realize: he is COPYING the bird's distinct melody.

As Kubo plucks a final note, several sheets of paper suddenly SPRING UP out of his bag, FOLDING themselves into --

A PAPER DUPLICATE OF THE LIVE BIRD!

Looking like a larger version of the gift Kubo gave to the girl acrobat, the origami SOARS up to greet the live bird.

Kubo watches in delight as the birds fly and frolic together HUNDREDS of feet above his head.

Monkey turns and sees what Kubo is doing. Notices Kubo's wonderstruck look.

MONKEY

We're in the Farlands now, Kubo.
Magic is stronger here.

KUBO

That means *I'm* stronger.

MONKEY

You might not want to look quite so pleased about that.

Kubo turns to Monkey, unsure what she means. She explains...

MONKEY

We grow stronger. The world gets harder. Life has a way of keeping things balanced.

As Kubo reacts to this cynical wisdom, we now REVEAL --

SOMETHING is crouched behind a bush, SPYING on Kubo and Monkey as they pass. Its GAZE fixes in on Yukami Origami.

We get only a GLIMPSE of this thing's FREAKISH CLAWS as Kubo and Monkey obviously continue their conversation.

KUBO

Monkey, do you ever say anything encouraging?

MONKEY

People die of encouragement.

Rolling his eyes again, Kubo suddenly gets an idea. Very discretely, he plucks a single string on his shamisen.

A moment later, his paper bird DIVES down from the clouds, stealthily advancing on Monkey and then suddenly --

NIPPING Monkey playfully on her backside!

Monkey WHIRLS around, searching for the culprit. But the bird has already SOARED UP and into the clouds again.

Monkey gives Kubo a suspicious look. Kubo stares back innocently. Swats his neck as if killing a bug.

KUBO

Mosquitos. Annoying.

With no evidence to convict, Monkey turns back around.

But now Kubo notices: unbidden by him, the bird is swooping back down for a second pass at Monkey.

This time, as it approaches Monkey the bird UNFOLDS ITSELF and forms into THREE PAPER MOSQUITOS.

KUBO

Hey! What are you doing? Get back here, all of you!

Too late. They're already circling Monkey, preparing to BITE and run. However, just as they get close enough to strike --

MONKEY SPRINGS INTO ACTION!

Without even looking behind her, she shoots out an arm and SNATCHES the first mosquito. Another arm GRABS the second.

As the third mosquito attempts to escape, Monkey launches into an amazing BACK FLIP and gets that one too.

She then approaches Kubo, unfolding the paper, smoothing it out neatly, and returning it to Kubo's bag.

MONKEY

Your supply is not inexhaustible.
Paper runs out. As does patience.

KUBO

Don't be angry at me. I didn't ask
them to do that. The second time.

Monkey gives Kubo a skeptical look.

KUBO

I didn't. It's like when I present
my stories back home...

As Kubo continues his explanation to Monkey, that creature with the CLAWS continues spying on them. It's CLOSER now.

KUBO

People assume I tell the paper what
to do. But usually, it tells me.

MONKEY

Let me remind you again Kubo: you
aren't home anymore. And this
isn't one of your stories.

KUBO

How do you know? Maybe it is.
(after a moment)
And I'm the valiant hero. And
you're the mean monkey. Who dies
right before the ending. And
nobody really cares that much.

Monkey doesn't respond to this. Just turns away from Kubo. But as she continues walking up the path she suddenly asks...

MONKEY

Is that why you didn't cry?

KUBO

What?

MONKEY

When I told you about your mother,
is that why you didn't cry? This
is all just another story to you.
With you as the great hero,
impervious to swords and sorrow.

KUBO

(softly)

I never cry. If I cry, it means I
lose.

But Monkey doesn't hear this as she continues lecturing...

MONKEY

Cause I assure you that is *not* the
case. The danger we face is real.
Any moment, something very terrible
could come out of nowhere and...

She turns her head to confront Kubo and trails off because --

KUBO IS NOW GONE!

MONKEY

... Kubo?

(no response)

KUBO GET BACK HERE NOW!

Still no response. Monkey is becoming more and more WORRIED.
Then, a faint cry for help from very far away...

KUBO (O.S.)

MONKEYYYYYYY!

Hearing Kubo in danger, an intense LOOK comes across Monkey's
face. We've seen her emotional before, but never like *this*.

With a yell of PRIMAL FURY, Monkey takes off SPRINTING into
the underbrush, following the direction of the shouts.

EXT. UNDERBRUSH -- DAY

A blur of SPEED and AGILITY, Monkey streaks through the tall
grass, listening for Kubo's cries. Finally arriving at --

A HOLE IN THE GROUND

Like a burrow that an animal might dig. Except it's over
FIVE FEET in diameter. Kubo's cries are coming from within.

KUBO (O.S.)
 ... MONKEY!

Monkey peers into the hole, catching a GLIMPSE of Kubo, a good twenty feet below.

He's ensnared in his own bag, being DRAGGED along by something we can barely see in the darkness.

All we can tell is that it's some kind of --

FREAKISH CREATURE!

Like a huge INSECT, running on two legs and clutching Kubo's bag in its claws, with Kubo still attached to it.

As Kubo is pulled out of sight and into the darkness, Monkey immediately jumps forward and goes...

PLUMMETING down into --

INT. UNDERGROUND BURROW -- CONTINUOUS

Dropping the twenty feet down to the ground, Monkey lands stealthily. Crouched and poised. Bone shard weapon DRAWN.

Spotting clawed "footprints" on the damp, muddy ground, Monkey takes off again, sprinting through the passages.

Turning corners at top speed, she suddenly skids to a STOP.

THERE IS THE CREATURE, CROUCHED DIRECTLY IN FRONT OF HER!

We get a better look now. Part giant BEETLE. But also part HUMAN, his shell mimicking the silhouette of SAMURAI ARMOR.

The creature is CROUCHED DOWN, staring intently forward as if he's *preparing to CHARGE* at monkey.

Not messing around, Monkey BRANDISHES that shard of bone and rushes towards the humanoid beetle.

MONKEY
Where's my boy?

And just as she reaches the beetle, SWINGING her weapon...

KUBO
 MONKEY WAIT!

Kubo steps out of the darkness, standing between the beetle and Monkey, putting out his hand to stop her from attacking.

KUBO
He wasn't trying to hurt me. He
just wanted... Yukami.

Kubo motions down to the beetle. And now it becomes clear:

The beetle was not crouching low to fight monkey, but to get
a better look at the Yukami origami, there on the ground.

BEETLE
(muttering to himself)
Yukami! I know that name.

Transfixed, Beetle reaches out a claw to gently touch Yukami.
The figure seems to like him, strolling right on to his arm.

BEETLE
I remember. I remember him. I
think maybe... he was my master!

KUBO
Yukami was your master?

For the first time, Beetle appears to register Kubo and
Monkey's presence. He looks up at them, wild-eyed.

BEETLE
We had a crest! A samurai crest!
It took me years to track it down.

Beetle suddenly LEAPS UP and RUSHES over to another section
of his burrow, filled with piles of SCAVENGED OBJECTS.

Frantically digging through tools and weapons and trinkets,
he pulls out a large samurai WAR BANNER. And then we see:

The familiar emblem of the beetle emblazoned on its fabric!

BEETLE
Have you seen this crest before?

Wordlessly, Kubo TURNS to show Beetle the same crest on the
back of his robe. Beetle's eyes light up with excitement.

BEETLE
THIS IS A MIRACLE! YOU HAVE OUR
ROBES! YOU'RE WEARING OUR ROBES!

But then Beetle turns on a dime, suddenly SUSPICIOUS of Kubo.

BEETLE
Why do you have our robes?

Before Kubo can answer, Monkey interrupts...

MONKEY

We don't have to answer your questions. Who are you anyway?

BEETLE

I was hoping you could tell me...

As Beetle talks, Kubo sifts through the piles of stuff, examining the objects. Many have the beetle crest on them.

BEETLE

For years I have wandered the
Farlands as a Ronin samurai.
(re: his appearance)
Trapped in this abhorrent state.

Kubo admires a crested BOW AND ARROW as Beetle continues.

BEETLE

No comrades. No master. Not even
a name. Or a single memory of the
noble samurai warrior I once was.

KUBO

You used to be a *man*?

BEETLE

A samurai. I'm certain of it.

MONKEY

If you have no memory, how can you
be certain of anything?

BEETLE

I do get... flashes. They come
about from a sound. A smell.

Beetle motions to the piles and piles of objects as he waxes on a bit melodramatically now.

BEETLE

An object I stumble on from time to
time. But those flashes fade.

As he talks, Beetle looks down at the Yukami origami, perched atop his shoulder. Then Beetle sadly concludes...

BEETLE

And all I'm left with is the sense
that I was once part of something
much *greater* than what I am today.

Kubo now steps over to Beetle and looks up at him steadily, deciding if he can trust him. And then...

KUBO
Yukami was my father.

Monkey shoots Kubo a disapproving look. She clearly didn't want him to say anything. But it's too late now.

BEETLE
Really?!? This is a miracle! I
HAVE FOUND THE SON OF MASTER!!!

Beetle picks Kubo up and gives him an ECSTATIC HUG. Then he abruptly bows down and TAKES A KNEE in front the boy.

BEETLE
Whatever brings you to these lands,
whatever your quest, it is now my
quest too. I will join you. I'll
give my life for you if necessary!

KUBO
You will?

BEETLE
(nodding vigorously)
I mean, I hope it's not. But you
know how quests go. People die all
the time. Drop like flies.

MONKEY
Thank you, Beetle. But we can't
ask you to put yourself in that
kind of danger.

BEETLE
I don't mind. I have a feeling,
this is how I'll find my memories
once and for all.
(dramatic again)
This... is our destiny!

MONKEY
What I'm trying to tell you is we
don't want you to come. No thieves
allowed. Be they man or bug.

BEETLE
How dare you. I'm not a thief.
I'm a noble samurai warrior,
searching for his story.

MONKEY
(re: piles of stuff)
Those things aren't your story. I
doubt they even belong to you.

BEETLE
They *hold* my story.

MONKEY
You hold your story. And you
dropped it. Because you are
foolish and frenetic and...

She is suddenly interrupted by the SPLASH of a GONG. An item
from the piles that Kubo has just STRUCK as hard as possible.

Kubo now steps between Monkey and Beetle, announcing...

KUBO
Monkey. Beetle. I believe this is
my decision to make.

Kubo looks from Monkey to Beetle. Monkey stares STERNLY.
Beetle gazes at Kubo HOPEFULLY, Yukami perched on his arm.

Kubo finally comes to a decision. He turns to Monkey.

KUBO
Our quest is a difficult one. A
samurai, even a cursed one that
looks like a bug, could be helpful.

BEETLE
Yes, I am certain I'd be helpful.
Incredibly helpful. Indispensable.

Snatching up that bow & arrow, Beetle suddenly launches an
arrow into the wall which he deftly SPLITS with another.

BEETLE
Just tell me of our quest, and I
will quickly demonstrate my
numerous... "indispensabilities."

KUBO
Our quest? It's kind of a long
story. And not a simple one.

BEETLE
You've got my attention. I won't
even blink.

Kubo likes the sound of that. Leaning forward, he asks...

KUBO
You won't? You promise? No matter
how unusual this may seem...?

FADE TO:

THE MOON

Once again we're looking up at it. Hearing a sound we recognize as a whale's song, we ANGLE DOWN to find we are --

EXT. GLACIER -- FARLANDS -- DUSK

We gradually realize we are on the spot where Kubo and Monkey first crash-landed, looking at those same three WHALES.

They're still here, under the ice singing that eerie song. Until it is drowned out by what seems to be a GUST of wind.

SPOOKED by what could be LARGE BIRDS landing atop the ice, the family of whales halt their song and hasten away.

Which is when we see, these "large birds" are actually:

THREE FAMILIAR FIGURES IN FLOWING ROBES AND PEASANT'S HATS!

It's Kubo's aunts, standing above us. One bends down to pick up a *SCRAP OF FABRIC* from Kubo's torn robe!

And as the aunts now set off in different directions, their dark, billowing robes FLAP AROUND US, taking us into --

DARKNESS.

BEETLE (PRELAP)
... So these masked, evil,
giggling, floating sisters --
they're your aunts?

INT. MOVING THROUGH UNDERGROUND PASSAGES -- NIGHT

Yukami Origami is pointing the way. Monkey, Beetle, and Kubo follow him through the winding underground caverns.

Kubo is NODDING in answer to the question. We can tell Monkey is losing patience with all of Beetle's chattering.

MONKEY
... Yes, bug. They're his aunts.

BEETLE
And they're after you, because your
grandfather wants your other eye?

Giving up now, Monkey just rolls her eyes as Kubo nods again.

KUBO
That's right.

BEETLE
That is *really* disturbing.

KUBO
I know.

BEETLE
On... many different levels.

KUBO
I agree.

BEETLE
I mean, eye-stealing grandfathers,
killer aunts... I don't think it
gets any more disturbing than that.

Just as Beetle says this, they turn a corner to see:

A VERY DISTURBING STRUCTURE!

It's an ancient temple. Enormous and sprawling in all
directions. A sense of looming MENACE to this place.

Yukami Origami POINTS at the temple triumphantly. Kubo,
Monkey, and Beetle stare way, way up its imposing walls.

BEETLE
Or maybe it does.

As Monkey turns to give Beetle another annoyed glare --

INT. TEMPLE ENTRANCE -- UNDERGROUND -- CONTINUOUS

Giant doors suddenly SWING OPEN on their own as our heroes
approach. Yukami points into the darkness of the temple.

KUBO
You go first, Yukami. If anything
happens to you, I can just dream
you up again.

Yukami squares his shoulders, then marches boldly forward,
leading them into the --

INT. ENTRANCE CHAMBER -- TEMPLE -- CONTINUOUS

As they pass the threshold, TORCHES positioned around the
chamber IGNITE spontaneously, dimly revealing:

This place is LARGER and CREEPIER than we even imagined.

The WALLS on either side of our heroes stretch hundreds of feet high, leading them into the darkness.

MONKEY

Come on. At the rate we're going,
the three sisters will be catching
up to us at any moment.

And almost the instant she says this, suddenly:

THE SISTERS APPEAR! FLOATING TOWARDS THEM, WEAPONS DRAWN!!!

BEETLE

GET BACK, KUBO!!!

Very freaked, Kubo LEAPS back as Beetle draws his bow and arrow and Monkey wields that shard of bone.

But then, the three sisters appear to VANISH again. Leaving only those empty temple walls.

BEETLE

Where did they go?

MONKEY

They must be around here somewhere.

But as they continue glancing around the chamber, it is Kubo who is the first to realize...

KUBO

No. I don't think they are.
(raising his voice)
I BELIEVE THEY WERE SCARED AWAY BY
ALL THE... VERY CUTE PUPPIES.

Thoroughly perplexed, Monkey & Beetle turn to regard Kubo.

But before they can say anything, *the entire temple instantly seems to fill with CUTE, FROLICKING PUPPIES!*

Kubo watches them, a childlike SMILE creeping onto his face.

KUBO

See? Whatever our mind *thinks*
about, the walls then *show* us.

Kubo appears to "think" for another moment. And then --

Three of the puppies begin doing elaborate FLIPS and tricks, reminding us of the kid acrobats back in the village.

KUBO

Get it? It's how this place works.

The walls abruptly go BLANK again as Kubo turns to finish explaining to Monkey and Beetle.

KUBO

When people come in here, they're scared. Then they see their fears and get even more scared. Then they leave. Quickly, I'd imagine.

MONKEY

How did you figure this out?

KUBO

My mother told me about this place. Now I know why she called it "The Temple Of The Mind."

(then)

She said it was where she and my father first met.

As Kubo says this, he is suddenly struck with an idea. He begins to "think" again. And again, the walls come to life:

They show a SAMURAI WARRIOR. Like a giant, life-like version of Yukami Origami. He's staring rapturously at --

A beautiful, long-haired WOMAN!

We recognize her as Kubo's mother, Sariatu. Young and resplendent. No bruises on her face. No gray in her hair.

Monkey & Beetle stand there staring up at the giant images of Sariatu & Yukami as Kubo stands in the center of all of them.

KUBO

I always pictured it looked something like that.

A moment as they continue to stare up at the wall. Yukami has dropped to his knees, as if professing his love.

BEETLE

(suddenly confused)

I'm not sure I understand.

MONKEY

What don't you understand now, bug?

BEETLE

Did Yukami come here for the magic armor... or for your mother?

Kubo turns to Beetle now. It's clear he's not certain about the answer to this as Beetle continues asking questions.

BEETLE

And what was she doing here in this temple anyway? And if a piece of armor is hidden here, why didn't he get it. Why'd he just give up his quest before he could finish it?

Kubo considers this for a few more moments. Then finally...

KUBO

My mother's mind wasn't well. Her stories weren't always... easy paths to follow.

As Kubo says this, he takes a step closer to the image of his parents on the wall. And that's when --

His foot STEPS on an odd STONE in the floor. Immediately, there is a CLICK. And then suddenly --

SHOOM! THE ENTIRE FLOOR OF THE TEMPLE OPENS UP BENEATH THEM!

Before they can react, Kubo, Beetle, Monkey, & Yukami Origami are SLIDING down a ramp into darkness, CRASHING into a wall.

Slowly getting to their feet, they find themselves in a vast chamber filled with REFLECTING POOLS.

And floating there in the center of the chamber is --

A GIANT, DISEMBODIED SKELETAL HAND HOLDING A GOLDEN SWORD!!!

KUBO

The Sword Unbreakable!

Kubo steps forward towards the hand, but then --

MONKEY

KUBO, WAIT!!!

The sheer VOLUME of Monkey's scream STARTLES THE HELL out of both Kubo and Beetle. She explains in a much lower voice...

MONKEY

It could be a trap.

BEETLE

Good point. Allow me.

Kubo backs away from the hand as Beetle crawls forward. He eyes the hand for a moment. Monkey still looks concerned.

MONKEY

Actually, Beetle...

BEETLE

Don't worry. I can do it.

Slowly, he extends one of his arrows out towards the hand, like he wants to make a trade.

After a moment, the fingers on the hand OPEN UP, allowing him access to the sword resting in its palm. Beetle smiles.

BEETLE

See?

He prepares to do a SWITCHEROO between the arrow and the sword. But as he reaches for the sword's hilt --

THE HAND SLAMS SHUT, CLAMPING DOWN ON HIS ARM!

Before Kubo or Monkey can even react --

A SECRET DOOR OPENS UP IN THE WALL. THE SKELETAL HAND FLIES THROUGH IT WITH BEETLE IN TOW!!!

INT. HALL OF BONES -- TEMPLE -- CONTINUOUS

True to its name, this long, tall CORRIDOR is decorated with GIANT SKELETAL BONES inlaid into the walls.

But as Kubo & Monkey race past, chasing Beetle and the hand:

The bones are coming LOOSE from the walls and FLYING through the air in the same direction as Monkey & Kubo.

It's as if they too are chasing Beetle and the hand.

Kubo, calls out to Monkey, warning her of what looks to be a twenty foot FEMUR spinning directly towards Monkey's head!

KUBO

Monkey! DUCK!

Monkey DUCKS in the nick of time. Then turns to see:

THE DEADLY STORM OF GIANT BONES FLYING STRAIGHT TOWARDS THEM!

MONKEY

I think they're headed the same place we are!

Kubo and Monkey turn corner after corner, DODGING the bones SHOOTING past them from behind as they run.

Eventually they veer into --

INT. CHAMBER OF THE ODOKURO -- TEMPLE -- CONTINUOUS

An enormous chamber with high walls and a vaulted ceiling just barely visible in the SHADOWY darkness.

Beetle stands alone in the center of the room with a surprised expression, holding that golden sword.

BEETLE

The hand just dropped me and
crawled away into the shadows.

KUBO

Where do you think it was going?

MONKEY

To join its family.

Kubo & Beetle look over to where Monkey is pointing to see:

The other bones still flooding into the room are also disappearing into the shadows.

An eerie moment of SILENCE as our heroes watch the bones skittering out of sight. That's when Monkey decides...

MONKEY

We have the sword. We should go.

She snatches the sword from Beetle and moves to leave. Which is when --

STONE BARRIERS suddenly DROP from the ceiling, cutting off all the exits.

Moments later, two FIRES ignite high up on the wall. As these flames illuminate the shadows, we realize:

THESE ARE ACTUALLY THE BURNING EYES OF A GIANT SKULL!

Still partially enveloped in shadow, it breaks free from the wall and HOVERS above the floor, looking down on our trio.

Which is when the bones emerge from the shadows, partially JOINED TOGETHER now to form different BODY PARTS.

The SPINAL COLUMN leads the charge, SLITHERING forward like a serpent and LOCKING into place under the monstrous skull.

MONKEY

It's an Odokuro!

BEETLE

What's an Odokuro?

MONKEY

I could explain it. Or we can just wait until it eats us.

KUBO

We have to do something! Before it finishes forming.

Beetle draws his bow and unleashes a stream of arrows at what is rapidly becoming a *GIANT SKELETON, five stories tall!*

But the arrows just bounce off harmlessly as the final body parts lock into place, ending with the HAND from the pool.

And now the Odokuro comes to life with a HORRIFIC SHRIEK!

Then he turns his attention to the three trespassers.

Monkey seems prepared for this as she RUSHES towards the Odokuro, raising that golden sword and shouting...

MONKEY

I INVOKE THE SWORD UNBREAKABLE!

With that, she LEAPS up and brings the sword down across the Odokuro's leg in an impressive SLASHING movement that --

COMPLETELY SHATTERS THE BLADE OF THE "UNBREAKABLE" SWORD!

Monkey lands stunned, staring at the empty hilt.

And then --

SMACK! A giant skeletal fist SMASHES the ground next to her. With furious SHRIEKS, the Odokuro is attempting to CRUSH her.

Monkey dodges and somersaults back towards Kubo and Beetle, who informs her...

BEETLE

Maybe that wasn't the Sword Unbreakable.

MONKEY

You don't say?

Their conversation is cut short as the Odokuro turns to face them all, rearing its head and letting out a massive SHRIEK.

As he does, the flames in his eyes literally EXPLODE with fury, better illuminating his head and revealing --

THE ODOKURO'S CROWN: DOZENS OF SWORDS EMBEDDED IN HIS HEAD!

BEETLE
 (pointing to the crown)
 Up there!

But now, the Odokuro's huge skeletal fists are SMASHING down again. Beetle GRABS Kubo, yanking him out of the way.

Monkey seizes this opportunity to CLIMB lightning-fast up the Odokuro's arm, LEAPING onto his head.

However, STANDING there amongst the swords, she isn't sure which one it is! They all look the same.

As she HESITATES a moment too long --

ONE OF THOSE SKELETAL HANDS COMES UP AND SNATCHES HER!!!

The Odokuro SCREAMS in triumph and brings Monkey closer and closer to his GAPING MOUTH. Looks like he wants to eat her.

But at the last second, Monkey hears another kind of SOUND... more pleasant and melodic than the Odokuro's screams.

It's the song that bird was singing earlier!

A MOMENT LATER, A SWARM OF FLYING PAPER BIRDS FLY UP FROM THE GROUND, CIRCLING THE ODOKURO'S HEAD LIKE GNATS!

As they swoop and dive around him, the Odokuro grows more and more ANGRY. He lets out another shriek. Now of FRUSTRATION.

Momentarily forgetting about Monkey, he SWIPES and SWATS and STOMPS at the annoying paper birds.

Below on the temple floor, Kubo plucks his shamisen and gazes up at the paper birds with that same wonderstruck smile.

Beetle watches Kubo, flabbergasted. He points at the birds.

BEETLE
 You did that with a song?

Kubo NODS. But just then, they are forced to DIVE out of the way of the Odokuro's STOMPING FEET.

Beetle shouts...

BEETLE
 So do you know the one about the
 three heroes who killed the giant
 skeleton and got the magic sword?

KUBO
 I'm still working on that one.

BEETLE
Perhaps it goes something like
this...

Beetle then GRABS Kubo as WINGS pop out from the side of his back in a manner similar to Kubo's robes earlier (page 36)!

With a huge FLYING LEAP, he rockets Kubo up into the air!

KUBO
You can fly?

BEETLE
Not quite. But I can fake it.

It's clear what Beetle means. He can't fly like a bird, but his wings allow enough thrust and maneuverability to --

Steer them PAST the Odokuro's flailing arms towards his head!

Still stuck in the hand, Monkey yells at Beetle as they pass.

MONKEY
WHAT ARE YOU DOING, BUG? YOU'LL
GET THE BOY KILLED!

BEETLE
WELL I WASN'T ABOUT TO LEAVE HIM
ALONE DOWN THERE!

As he shouts down to Monkey, Beetle WEAVES around the distracted Odokuro, LANDING on top of the monster's head.

Now we get a close-up look at that CROWN: dozens of SWORDS embedded Excalibur-style into the guardian's skull.

Beetle immediately SWEEPS his arm across the swords, SHATTERING all but one blade.

Beetle gives it a TUG, but the blade is deeply imbedded in the skull. He gives it more tugs. It's loosening now.

BEETLE
Almost got it...

But before he can finish his sentence --

THE ODOKURO'S SKELETAL HAND SNATCHES HIM UP TOO!

With most of the paper birds destroyed, the Odokuro's attention has gone back to the initial trespassers.

Holding Beetle and Monkey in each hand, the Odokuro lets out a victorious HOWL, slowly CRUSHING both of them!

Meanwhile, Kubo makes his way over to the sword and --

GIVES IT A FINAL PULL, YANKING IT OUT OF THE SKULL!

The Odokuro suddenly STOPS in his tracks, looking CONFUSED.
And a moment later ---

THE ODOKURO BEGINS COMING APART, BONE BY BONE!

It's as if by pulling out the sword, Kubo has removed the LINCHPIN that was holding all the individual bones together.

Kubo's SMILE of satisfaction abruptly FADES as he realizes:

With the Odokuro CRUMBLING beneath his feet, it's only a matter of time before he will begin to FALL!

KUBO

BEETLE!!!!

Hearing Kubo's cries, Beetle pries himself from the Odokuro's lifeless hand and LEAPS up to CATCH Kubo --

-- just as everything starts to GIVE WAY.

Soaring back down, Beetle also GRABS Monkey, gently easing all of them to the ground. As --

THE ENTIRE SKELETAL STRUCTURE COMES FALLING TOWARDS THEM!

EXT. SURFACE -- ABOVE THE UNDERGROUND TEMPLE -- SUNSET

A cloud of DUST shoots out of a HOLE in the ground.

A moment later, several of Kubo's paper birds come flying out of the hole. They are carrying Kubo, Monkey, and Beetle.

The birds clearly AIR-LIFTED them out of there, fluttering around our half conscious heroes as Beetle mumbles...

BEETLE

That was a pretty good song.

Kubo picks up the golden sword and inspects it, weakly savoring the victory. He too mumbles...

KUBO

And that was pretty good flying.

MONKEY

That was a disaster. We're lucky to be alive. Now let's get moving.

But Kubo and Beetle are already PASSED OUT.

Not thrilled with this situation, Monkey camouflages them as best she can, covering them with some loose GRASS and SHRUBS.

Then she kneels down next to them in the shadows, staying absolutely still. Meditative.

... Keeping a wary eye on that rising moon.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. SURFACE -- ABOVE THE UNDERGROUND TEMPLE -- NIGHT

Monkey is now DOZING off. Her head sinking lower and lower. Until suddenly, it SNAPS back up. Monkey has spotted:

An odd, fist-sized SPHERE is ROLLING towards her. Another one is behind it. And another rolls behind that.

MONKEY

Kubo! Beetle! Wake up!

Lifting their heads, Kubo and Beetle see them too now:

The DOZENS OF SPHERES are dropping down from the branches of a nearby tree where what seems to be a HUGE BIRD perches.

It shuffles its wings a few times.

Then spreads them wide open to reveal a *PORCELAIN WHITE, FEMALE FACE!*

IT'S ONE OF THE THREE SISTERS! THE ONE WITH THE NECKLACE!

Brooding on that tree branch, we now can see she has her necklace OPENED, dropping those "beads" off one by one.

Monkey seems to know what this means. And it terrifies her.

MONKEY

SHE'S USING THE NECKLACE! RUN!

Grabbing the Sword Unbreakable and throwing Kubo on to her back, she races away from the spheres. Beetle follows.

Back up in the tree, the sister makes no move to give chase.

Instead, she hisses out some arcane words and...

The strange spheres seem to take on a life of their own, ROLLING forward in pursuit of the trio as they all enter --

EXT. DARK FORREST -- CONTINUOUS

Running next to Monkey and Kubo, Beetle asks...

BEETLE

What's so scary about a necklace?
We must stand and fight!

MONKEY

NO, BUG! INTO THE TREES. HURRY!

But Beetle ignores her as she LEAPS onto the nearest branch and climbs up into the trees, jumping from branch to branch.

Clinging to Monkey's back, Kubo can now see below:

Those spheres moving after them across the forest floor. As they roll, they QUIVER and VIBRATE. Like *eggs hatching*.

Which is exactly what they are! Still in motion, the spheres now EXPAND like snowballs and BURST OPEN to reveal --

DOZENS OF GIANT CRICKETS, SWARMING AFTER OUR HEROES!

Eyes growing WIDE, Beetle gives up on his desire to "fight" and jumps up into the trees, fleeing the horrid creatures.

As Monkey makes a sudden turn, Kubo momentarily loses his grip on her back and FALLS several feet onto a lower branch.

JUMPING up into the trees, the hissing crickets skitter towards him, gnashing sharp, JAGGED TEETH as Kubo yells...

KUBO

MONKEYYYYYYYY!!!!!!!!!!

At the last second, Monkey dives down and GRABS Kubo. With the crickets almost upon them both, she --

TOSSES Kubo up to Beetle, then DRAWS the Sword Unbreakable. FLIPPING over the swarm of crickets, she SLASHES ten at once!

But as she lands, she hears Kubo's SHOUTS again. Over on the next tree, Beetle and Kubo are SURROUNDED by crickets.

BEETLE

MONKEY, HERE!

Beetle then TOSSES Kubo back to Monkey and draws four arrows from his quiver, aiming them at a cluster of crickets.

Monkey CATCHES Kubo and continues running as Kubo watches:

Beetle's four arrows SPLIT into MORE ARROWS as they race to their targets, PINNING the twenty-plus crickets to the trees.

Kubo lets out a CHEER and Beetle pumps his fist in victory as they continue jumping from branch to branch.

Monkey and Beetle focus on avoiding the snapping crickets and navigating perilous DROPS while Kubo observes...

KUBO

We're running out of trees!

He's right. With the forest tapering off, the first lights of DAWN can be seen directly ahead. But then --

A CURTAIN OF CRICKETS SWARMS IN, OBSCURING THE SUNLIGHT!

They've now gotten AHEAD of our heroes, blocking their path.

Already in mid-leap, it's just too late for Monkey to change course. All she can do is ready her sword.

Which is when, in a moment where time itself seems to slow --

Kubo LETS GO of her back, pulls out his shamisen, and PLUCKS the strings...

And immediately, the remaining sheets of paper EXPLODE from his bag, forming themselves into lethal THROWING STARS!

THESE "SHURIKEN" THROWING STARS ZIP FORWARD IN A BLINDING BARRAGE THAT SHREDS THE CURTAIN OF CRICKETS!!!

His bag EMPTY now, Kubo and Monkey LEAP safely through the remaining trees and to the edge of the forest to find --

A DEAD END.

The forest has tapered into the precipice of a HIGH ROCKY CLIFF, overlooking a LONG LAKE almost a mile below them.

Still propelled by their forward inertia, Kubo and Monkey are about to STUMBLE off the cliff...

Until something grabs them both at the last second!

It's Beetle, fluttering his wings. He hovers there at the edge of the forest, motioning at the water far below.

BEETLE

I can glide us down to the...!

But as he is saying this, he is unaware that the blade of the sister's "Kusari Gam" is flying directly towards him!

IT SCORES A DIRECT, PAINFUL HIT THAT CLIPS BEETLE'S WINGS!

Our heroes FALL heavily, landing in a pile on the ground.

They look up to see: *the sister of the necklace gliding over to them.* Her name is --

CEPHEID

A savage ape. A thieving bug. And
a one-eyed orphan.

As she speaks, she wields the CHAIN attached to the curved blade. It seems to flow and retract with a mind of its own.

CEPHEID

I suppose in *your* telling of this
story, you have somehow made
yourselves the heroes.

Monkey draws her SWORD, Kubo raises his SHAMISEN, and Beetle loads his BOW as the sister continues towards them.

CEPHEID

The problem is, you won't be living
to tell this story.

With that, she SWOOPS forward in a movement that defies physics and logic, KNOCKING our heroes off the cliff.

Beetle and Monkey FALL, but Kubo is immediately SNAGGED by that impossible chain.

He clings to his shamisen by a single string as he is REELED IN, right back up to his giggling aunt.

CEPHEID

I cannot let you fall, Kubo. I
believe you owe me something first.

SHE THEN RAISES HER BLADE, PREPARING TO CARVE OUT HIS EYE!

KUBO

Yes. I believe I owe you a song.
To honor my mother.

He then allows his shamisen to fall, PLUCKING the string one last time as it DROPS off the cliff after Monkey and Beetle.

The single note ECHOES through the air, joined by an odd RUSTLING SOUND growing louder and louder.

Puzzled by this sound, Cepheid TURNS towards it to see:

A TORNADO OF LEAVES, BRANCHES, AND ROCKS BLOWING TOWARDS HER!

This blast of DEBRIS from the forest EXPLODES both Kubo and his aunt out from the trees and into the rays of the SUN.

Cepheid raises her head to gaze up at the sun with a whisper of FEAR in another language.

BEFORE RAPIDLY TURNING TO DUST!

Still flying backward from the explosion, Kubo watches this happen. Even as he is once again FALLING off those --

EXT. HIGH CLIFFS OVER WATER -- CONTINUOUS

As he drops, he spots Monkey and Beetle far below... about to SMASH into the deadly rocks.

But before they can --

The tornado of branches and leaves and other forest debris rockets under them, FOLDING and TWISTING together to form:

A HUGE AND MAGNIFICENT "ORIGAMI" BOAT!!!

The boat CATCHES Monkey. Then Beetle.

And a few moments later it catches Kubo.

Then it LANDS quite GENTLY on the surface of the lake.

As the sun now comes fully into the sky, Beetle and Monkey both stare at Kubo in total ASTONISHMENT.

And, for the first time since we've met him, Kubo is GRINNING from ear to ear.

BEETLE

Did you *know* you could do that?

Kubo thinks for a beat. Then, as he CATCHES his shamisen...

KUBO

We're in the Farlands now. Magic is stronger here.

(plucking another note)

Which means *I'm* stronger.

And with that final plucked note --

A MASSIVE SAIL WOVEN FROM LEAVES AND GRASS SUDDENLY UNFURLS!

And our three heroes SAIL AWAY into the rising sun.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. KUBO'S SAIL BOAT -- "THE LONG LAKE" -- AFTERNOON

We can tell the trio has been sailing for some time now.
There is no sign of land in any direction.

Beetle has apparently caught some fish and is using his claws
like a sushi chef to chop them into a beautiful meal.

It's a nice, quiet, gentle moment. Our three heroes, eating
under the sun. Kubo sits right between Beetle and Monkey.

Until Beetle notices: Kubo isn't really eating. He's just
glancing from Beetle to Monkey with an odd look on his face.

BEETLE

What's the matter, Kubo? You act
like you've never had a meal
sitting between a monkey and a
beetle before.

KUBO

I've never had a meal sitting
between *anyone* before.

MONKEY

Eat Kubo. You need energy.

Kubo obeys. Takes a bite of food. Beetle chews thoughtfully
as he stares at Kubo now, clearly thinking about his comment.

BEETLE

Kubo? Before you were a great
hero, battling giant skeletons and
fighting off killer crickets, what
were you like?

KUBO

I told stories. That was my job.
I was pretty good at telling them.
Not as good at ending them.

BEETLE

You told stories. Makes sense.
Did you ever tell funny ones?

KUBO

Funny ones?

BEETLE

You know. Where people fall down.
Smack into one another. Get hurt.

MONKEY

What's funny about that, bug?

BEETLE
It just is. It's amusing.

KUBO
I tried to make my stories a little
bit of everything. That's what
seemed the most... truthful.

But Monkey is still GLARING at Beetle, annoyed by his words.

MONKEY
So for example, if we don't make it
to the end of this lake by
nightfall. And we get attacked.
Injured. Perhaps mortally wounded.
You would find that *amusing*?

BEETLE
(considers this)
No. That would not be so amusing.

They eat in silence for a while now. But then...

KUBO
Early on, there were days. Good
days. Where my mother woke up with
her eyes mostly clear. And I could
tell she saw me. Really saw *me*.

Monkey now stops eating as Kubo continues.

KUBO
And what I loved most about those
days, is that I could see her too.
Right back through those eyes.

MONKEY
What did you see?

KUBO
Her real self. Her spirit.
Whatever you want to call it. It
was still in there, trying to find
its way out. It was beautiful.

And now, even Beetle has stopped eating as Kubo concludes.

KUBO
On those days, the good days, the
stories I told would have everyone
in the crowd roaring with laughter.

Wow. Both Monkey & Beetle look at each other, not quite sure
how to respond to this. Finally, it is Beetle who offers...

BEETLE

You know something, Kubo?
 (touches Kubo shoulder)
 I'm starting to think, before the
 crickets, before the skeletons,
 back when you just told stories...
 you were still *very much* a hero.

Kubo looks up at Beetle, liking the sound of that. Monkey
 does to. She gives Beetle an approving nod.

They go back to eating. Sitting a bit closer together now.

EXT. KUBO'S SAIL BOAT -- "THE LONG LAKE" -- DUSK

Monkey stands behind Beetle, treating his wounded wing with
 kelp and mud. As Beetle flinches, she hisses...

MONKEY

Keep still, bug. And yes, I know
 that isn't easy for you.

Kubo sits nearby, absently plucking his shamisen.

In response to his plucking, some of the grass and leaves
 making up the boat form an ORIGAMI IMAGE OF SARIATU.

Seeing the REFLECTION of this "Sariatu" in the water of the
 lake, Yukami Origami steps over and stares at her in wonder.

It's clear this is an exact duplication of that same TABLEAU
 we saw on the walls of The Temple of the Mind.

BEETLE

(re: tableau)
 Are you doing that?

Kubo nods. As he continues to pluck strings, Yukami Origami
 falls to his knees, just like we saw on the wall earlier.

KUBO

I'm just trying to figure out the
 answer to your question.

BEETLE

Which question? I had several.

KUBO

What *was* my mother doing in the
 temple to begin with? And why *did*
 my father give up his quest...

Kubo points to the golden sword, lying nearby.

KUBO

... When he was so very close.

Monkey finishes wrapping Beetle's wound and looks up, searching the horizon. Her expression grows more CONCERNED as she sees the sun, SETTING behind the clouds.

MONKEY

The moment we spot land, we're
going to have to move very quickly.
Get to shore. Find a hiding place.

Vaguely registering Monkey's urgency, Kubo and Beetle continue their conversation. Beetle is thinking out loud...

BEETLE

Before he met your mother, your
father was a great samurai leader.
(then)
But did you mother ever talk about
who *she* was? Before she met him.

KUBO

Yes. But it never made much sense.
(shrugging)
She said she and her sisters were
stars in the night sky. They
served their father. The moon.

BEETLE

She said the moon was her father?

KUBO

That's how the story goes.

BEETLE

That would mean he's *your*...
grandfather. Grandpa Moon.
("scary")
Watch out for Grandpa Moon. He's
coming to get you.

Kubo giggles at the absurdity of all of this. A nice moment between Kubo & Beetle, making light of it all. Until...

MONKEY (O.S.)

Your mother also spoke of her
father's power.

Kubo and Beetle turn to see Monkey glowering at them.

MONKEY

When he was disobeyed, his fury
rose oceans and leveled mountains.

She points to the last rays of the setting sun in the sky.

MONKEY

And in a just few minutes, he will
be up there and he *will* spot us.
Now help me look for land.

Both Kubo and Beetle get to their feet. But then Beetle
hesitates, STARING at something behind Monkey.

BEETLE

I don't think we're going to be
able to go to land just yet.

MONKEY

What are you talking about, bug?
If we don't, we're as good as dead.

Wordlessly, Beetle POINTS at something behind Monkey:

It's Yukami Origami. While everyone was talking he casually
walked over to the bow of the boat, where he is now --

POINTING WITH HIS SWORD, DIRECTLY INTO THE WATER!

The meaning is clear. The next piece of armor is down there!

Monkey looks down at Yukami, then up again at that dying sun.
We can tell she is really not happy about this.

Beetle hurries over to the area where Yukami is pointing and
prepares to immediately jump in the water.

BEETLE

I'll go. I'm a fast swimmer. And
when I dig tunnels, I can hold my
breath for several minutes.

But just as Beetle is coiling to dive, Kubo calls...

KUBO

Beetle, wait!
(Beetle turns to Kubo)
My mother used to tell me tales of
the long lake. She said it was
filled with Ningen.

BEETLE

Ningen? What are Ningen?

KUBO

She was never entirely clear about
that. She said they lived in these
giant gardens at the bottom.

We now notice a light RAIN has started as Kubo continues...

KUBO

You can never look directly into
their eyes. Because that's how
they bewitch their prey.

(recites)

"The deepest truth of your life is
the last thing you will ever see."

BEETLE

Okay. Well, I won't look directly
into anyone's eyes. Even if I'm
being incredibly sincere.

With that, he gives them a salute and DIVES into the water.

Camera FOLLOWS Beetle as he swims deeper and deeper into the
lake, until we notice...

A pall of eerie green light beginning to ILLUMINATE his face.

EXT. KUBO'S SAIL BOAT -- "THE LONG LAKE" -- NIGHT

Rain is POURING down now, continuing to build to a full blown
storm. It's obvious Beetle has been gone for a while.

Kubo stares down at the water while Monkey stares UP at the
MOON. It's just barely visible behind the storm clouds.

Meanwhile, Kubo draws closer to the water. Puts a hand in.
We can tell he desperately wants to go in after Beetle.

He SHOUTS to Monkey over the storm.

KUBO

MONKEY? HOW LONG REALLY CAN
BEETLES HOLD THEIR BREATH?

MONKEY

A VERY LONG TIME.

KUBO

I THINK HE'S IN TROUBLE.

MONKEY

KUBO, TWO OF YOUR AUNTS ARE STILL
OUT THERE. THEY COULD SPOT US ANY
MOMENT. I'M SORRY. BUT WE HAVE TO
HEAD FOR SHORE.

As she says the word "shore," a FLASH of lightning gets
Monkey's attention. Monkey turns to look at it --

Which is when she hears a SPLASH of water behind her.

And when she turns back to where Kubo was standing, she sees... Kubo has VANISHED. He's dived in after Beetle.

MONKEY

KUBO, YOU HAVE TO STOP DOING THAT!

Spotting Kubo's feet disappearing down into the water, Monkey immediately grabs the Sword Unbreakable.

Then she too dives off the boat into --

EXT. UNDERWATER -- "THE LONG LAKE" -- STORMY NIGHT

Holding his breath in puffed cheeks, Kubo swims down towards CAMERA. A second FLASH of lightning reveals:

Monkey is about fifty feet behind him, trying to catch up.

But as she kicks her feet, propelling herself deeper into the water, something WRAPS around her foot. It's a CHAIN!!!

And a moment later --

MONKEY IS YANKED VIOLENTLY OUT OF THE WATER!

Like a shark getting hauled in, Monkey is lifted high into the air, then DROPPED heavily back onto the deck of the boat.

As she lies DAZED and SPUTTERING, Monkey follows the links of the chain to see a grim silhouette standing over her.

A third FLASH of lightning reveals it to be:

ANOTHER ONE OF THE MASKED SISTERS, HOLDING THAT CHAIN!

As the sister stares down at Monkey, her WHISPERS can somehow be heard over the sounds of the storm. We will call her --

NEBULA

Now I have a tale to tell all the
fishermen. I put my line in the
water and reeled in a stinking ape.

The giggling sister crouches very close to Monkey now.

NEBULA

How fitting that this is what's
left of Sariatu's magic.

Monkey speaks very weakly, forcing Nebula to move even closer as she responds...

MONKEY

This ape will tear you apart.

And as the sister considers this, Monkey suddenly --

SPRINGS FORWARD, WRAPPING THE CHAIN AROUND HER NECK!

And as Monkey and Nebula begin to STRUGGLE back and forth...

INT. UNDERWATER -- "THE LONG LAKE" -- STORMY NIGHT

Kubo is surrounded by schools of strange and beautiful FISH that surround and obscure his sight.

He searches for Beetle, swimming deeper into a bed of KELP.

Which is when another FLASH of lightning, scatters the fish and suddenly, as if falling from heaven, we see --

A GOLDEN BREASTPLATE PASSES IN FRONT OF HIS EYES!

From its shape and design, we can immediately tell that this is the second piece of the magical armor.

Kubo looks up to where the breastplate came from to see:

BEETLE! CAUGHT IN THE CLUTCHES OF AN UNNERVING CREATURE!

Its body is like a STALK lined with tiny centipede ARMS, ending in what appears to be an over-sized GLOWING EYEBALL.

This is a Ningen, and its EYE has clearly HYPNOTIZED Beetle.

With a last glance at the breastplate, dropping back down to the darkness of the deeper water, Kubo makes a decision --

He swims UP to Beetle, trying to free his limp friend from the Ningen's arms. But this thing is deceptively STRONG.

Growing frustrated with this tug of war, Kubo finally curls his fingers into a FIST and --

SOCKS THE NINGEN AS HARD AS HE CAN, RIGHT IN ITS GLOWING EYE!

A SCREAM ECHOES THROUGH THE WATER, COMING FROM BELOW AS MANY MORE OVER-SIZED EYEBALLS FLASH TO LIFE ALL AROUND KUBO!

We now see: he is SURROUNDED by stalks! But the punch has worked. The arms holding Beetle have LOOSENED their grip.

Clearly on his last bit of air, Kubo grabs the still unconscious Beetle and begins DRAGGING him up towards the --

EXT. WATER'S SURFACE -- "THE LONG LAKE" -- STORM

The storm is RAGING now. As is the BATTLE on the boat between Monkey and Nebula. Right now, Monkey is on the run.

Nebula swings that whistling CHAIN, SMASHING it around the boat. Monkey dodges and somersaults, barely avoiding it.

NEBULA

In the years since Sariatu left us,
I have crushed creatures who could
fit this world on their fingernail.

And with another FLASH of lightning, it now becomes clear:

Monkey is trying to make it across the boat to GRAB the Sword Unbreakable and Nebula is using the chain to cut her off.

NEBULA

I tell you that so you understand,
this victory brings me no honor.

MONKEY

Imagine how you're going to feel
when you lose.

And with that, Monkey "parkours" herself onto the mast of the boat, KICKING off it and into a series of stunning FLIPS.

Her flips take her OVER Nebula's head and into position to --

GRAB THE SWORD UNBREAKABLE!

Sword in hand, Monkey immediately launches into a FRENZIED ASSAULT of her own. Now Nebula is the one DODGING the blows.

NEBULA

I have felt loss once before.
Seven years ago, I lost my sister.

With that, she SPRINGS forward, regaining the offensive.

NEBULA

It's a sad story. She fell in love
with a fool. Betrayed our father.
His wrath has still not waned.

MONKEY

There are many sad stories about
wrathful fathers...

And with a single swing of Sword Unbreakable, Monkey now --

SLICES NEBULA'S CHAIN INTO TWO HALVES!

MONKEY

... Very few of them end well for
the father.

But as she moves forward to strike a death blow, Nebula suddenly seems to have VANISHED into the darkness.

Sword leveled, Monkey SEARCHES around for Nebula, attempting to pinpoint her hideous GIGGLES, coming from every direction.

Successive FLASHES of lightning create a strobe effect, revealing GLIMPSES of Nebula THROUGH THE WHIPPING SAILS as...

NEBULA (O.S.)

How dare you. He had every right
to be angry at his cowardly,
ungrateful daughter.

MONKEY

Who is the cowardly one now?

NEBULA (O.S.)

She hid from him in a cave while
her *mind* and *body* crumbled to dust.

As Nebula speaks these words, we see that familiar porcelain mask slowly rising into frame *directly behind monkey!*

MONKEY

Perhaps. But she was with her son.
And he made her *spirit* soar.

Monkey suddenly PIVOTS and RAISES her sword. However, before she can follow through with an ATTACK on Nebula --

One piece of the chain SNAKES UP and COILS around her body!
That other piece SNAGS the sword and WHIPS it from her hand.

The sword FLIES across the deck and lodges into the edge of the boat, just inches from where...

KUBO HAS NOW CLIMBED OUT OF THE WATER, STRUGGLING MIGHTILY TO PULL THE UNCONSCIOUS BEETLE BACK UP ONTO THE SHIP!

Spotting Kubo, Nebula lets out a banshee SCREAM of delight and immediately sweeps across the deck towards him.

As Monkey struggles furiously to get loose from the chain, Nebula draws a SICKLE like the one we saw earlier.

NEBULA

My little nephew. You have been
naughty. If I were your mommy,
you'd have been taught manners.

Still GASPING for air, Kubo can do little more than stare like a deer in headlights as Nebula glides closer and closer.

Until she is suddenly YANKED BACKWARDS!

Monkey has gotten loose and used the chain half to LASSO Nebula, whipping her around and SMASHING her into the mast.

MONKEY

But you're not his mommy!

(adds)

You're just the crazy aunt.

The chain doesn't hold Nebula for long. She "HOUDINI'S" her body, rapidly shrugging off the chains as Monkey cries...

MONKEY

KUBO! GET BACK IN THE WATER.

YOU'RE SAFER THERE!

With a final look at Beetle, who is beginning to wake and sputter now, Kubo takes a deep breath, and dives back into --

EXT. UNDERWATER -- "THE LONG LAKE" -- CONTINUOUS

Knowing where to go now, Kubo kicks down through the Ninjen "garden," careful to avoid looking at the glowing "eyes."

He spots the BREASTPLATE, resting in the stalk-like arms of one of the creatures and immediately heads towards it.

Eyes averted, he GRABS the armor and heads up to the surface.

He's almost past the "garden" when suddenly, a school of menacing-looking SAW-TOOTHED FISH comes darting towards him.

Kubo TWISTS to get out of the way, coming face to face with --

ONE OF THOSE FRIGHTFUL, GLOWING EYES!

Immediately, Kubo's body goes LIMP as he stares at the eye in rapt fascination.

And the Ningen's arms rise to EMBRACE him.

EXT. KUBO'S SAIL BOAT -- "THE LONG LAKE" -- NIGHT

Beetle sputters some more and AWAKENS fully to find that: *Kubo's sail boat is gradually COMING APART beneath him.*

With everything breaking apart, Yukami Origami hops around desperately trying to stay dry as --

MONKEY FLIPS OVER HIM, LOCKED IN COMBAT WITH NEBULA!

The slow "unfolding" of the boat has only forced their battle to become more acrobatic as they dart and flip and strike.

Noticing Beetle is now awake, Monkey SCREAMS at him over the thunder as she BLOCKS a series of blows from Sister.

MONKEY
BEETLE! DIVE BACK DOWN THERE!

Monkey GESTURES at the SLOWLY DISINTEGRATING BOAT.

MONKEY
SOMETHING HAS HAPPENED TO KUBO!

EXT. UNDERWATER -- "THE LONG LAKE" -- CONTINUOUS

Kubo is right where we left him, still STARING BLANKLY into the Ningen's glowing eye as --

-- the freaky stalks gradually use their arms to DRAG HIM DOWN towards whatever is at the bottom of the garden.

Kubo is pulled lower. And lower. And lower. Until...

WHISH! An arrow PIERCES that glowing eye! Just like before, the other eyes LIGHT UP and the sea is filled with SCREAMS!

We now reveal Kubo's savior is, of course:

Beetle! Firing those arrows. He then swims over to Kubo and GRABS him, preparing to take him to the surface.

But Kubo has already regained consciousness. Looking down, he spots the tell tale GLEAM of the breastplate below.

Kubo gives Beetle a look like, "*I can do it,*" he turns and swims through the stalks towards the bottom of the lake.

Beetle starts to swim after him, but his body is too BIG to squeeze through the tiny OPENINGS of the stalks.

Beetle can only watch as: *the stalks of the Ningen slowly SLITHER towards Kubo, defending whatever is at their root.*

Beetle tries to CALL OUT to Kubo... but they are under water. Beetle's only choice is to raise his bow again.

He sends a volley of arrows, SPEARING one eye after another.

With each direct hit, the Ningen GLOWS and WRITHES in pain, illuminating what lies at the BASE of the garden. It's:

A GIANT MOUTH WITH HUNDREDS OF ROWS OF HUGE JAGGED TEETH!

And directly above it, Kubo reaches to GRAB the breastplate off one of the stalks --

-- and just MISSES it, sending the armor falling deeper into the lake. Directly towards that hideous MOUTH.

Running out of time and air, Kubo SNATCHES the breastplate and pulls it to his chest.

But this moment of victory is short lived as we realize: *Kubo is now beginning to FADE from consciousness!*

Still clutching the breastplate, he PASSES OUT and begins DRIFTING back down towards that mouth!

Witnessing this, Beetle reaches for his quiver.

Grabbing a strand of kelp, Beetle attaches it to an arrow and FIRES it towards the sinking Kubo as we go back to --

EXT. KUBO'S SAIL BOAT -- THE LONG LAKE -- RAGING STORM

The sail boat is basically in SHAMBLES now, a torn memory of its former glory. Yet still, the FIGHT continues.

Using the pieces of the boat like STEPPING STONES, Monkey wields her sword as Nebula swings both pieces of the chain.

NEBULA

... It never fails to amaze me, how the creatures down here fight so hard, just to die another day.

MONKEY

Down here, there are days worth fighting for.

NEBULA

There is nothing down here worth anything!

As she says this, she SMASHES MONKEY IN THE HEAD with her chain, causing Monkey to STUMBLE, almost going overboard.

Nebula immediately presses in, straddling Monkey and CHOKING her with the smaller piece of chain.

NEBULA

When we have Kubo's eye, he will see that for himself.

She SQUEEZES the chain harder as she continues...

NEBULA

It's pathetic, what happened to my sister. I looked up to her. She was so strong. Love made her weak.

MONKEY

That isn't how it works down here. I have only become stronger.

This comment causes Nebula to hesitate a moment. She stares down at Monkey in CONFUSION now.

Which is when --

Monkey uses a BURST of strength to THROW the sister off of her and KIP up to her feet, pulling away the chain.

Pressing her advantage, Monkey SPRINGS into the air --

RAISING THE SWORD UNBREAKABLE FOR ITS MIGHTIEST BLOW!

And as Nebula looks up HELPLESSLY at the savage monkey and her golden sword, moving in for the KILL...

EXT. UNDERWATER -- "THE LONG LAKE" -- STORMY NIGHT

Beetle is just a few feet from the surface, dragging the unconscious Kubo. When he looks up and sees something:

It's Nebula's cracked MASK!

It floats down past him, DISAPPEARING into the darkness of the water.

Beetle continues up past it, surfacing to --

EXT. WATER'S SURFACE -- RAGING STORM -- CONTINUOUS

As Beetle's head breaks the surface, he looks around to see the scattered and fragmented remains of Kubo's boat.

MONKEY (O.S.)

... OVER HERE!

Monkey is crouched on a floating chunk of boat, no more than a few feet wide, WAVING her arms to get Beetle's attention.

Beetle drags Kubo through the water over to Monkey and hauls his limp body up onto the chunk of the sail boat.

Both Monkey and Beetle check for signs of life.

MONKEY

Kubo, wake up! Wake up, boy!

BEETLE

Come on, Kubo! Come back to us!

They continue to shake Kubo and speak to him. But Kubo remains limp and unmoving.

Then Beetle gets an idea. He leans in and WHISPERS to Kubo, trying desperately to coax him back to life.

BEETLE

Kubo, tell me a story! Wake up and tell me a story. I can't see into your dreams... so please wake up!

But still Kubo remains lifeless and still. Beetle isn't giving up though. He continues on, pleading...

BEETLE

Tell me the tale of what happened just now! How the Ningen bewitched you in the lake. What deep truths did it show you in its fatal eye?

Still nothing from Kubo. Beetle isn't sure what to say next.

But then Beetle and Monkey notice --

THE PIECES OF THE BOAT ARE SLOWLY BEGINNING TO REASSEMBLE ALL AROUND THEM!

Realizing what this means, they both look down at Kubo again.

His eyes are OPEN. And he's SMILING now as he looks directly up at Monkey and says simply...

KUBO

Mother.

Monkey doesn't respond. Other than to --

Reach down and give Kubo an enormous, tearful HUG.

Beetle watches this embrace with an almost comical level of ASTONISHMENT as the boat continues to fold back together.

And as that magnificent SAIL unfurls, once again...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. ARRIVING AT SHORE -- THE LONG LAKE -- NIGHT

The storm has finally come to an end as Kubo's sailboat calmly reaches the SHORE of the Long Lake.

Led by Yukami origami, Kubo, Monkey, & Beetle step off the boat, noticing a cluster of CAVES not that far away.

BEETLE'S VOICE (O.S.)

It should come as no great surprise
to anyone that I have questions.
Lots and lots of questions. Lots!

INT. CAVE THAT REMINDS US OF HOME -- NIGHT

Kubo, Monkey, & Beetle sit around a CAMPFIRE, concluding a meal of cooked fish with berries for dessert.

Beetle is prattling on rapid fire, his food untouched.

BEETLE

Is Kubo right, Monkey? Are you
Sariatu? If so, how? And why
didn't you tell us? And...?

MONKEY

(cutting him off)
Questions can wait. We need sleep.

Monkey abruptly rises and begins preparing the cave for bedtime. Kubo notices Beetle's regretful look.

KUBO

(for Monkey's benefit)
Beetle. If you're like me, you
won't sleep if you have questions.

BEETLE

That's true. I probably won't.

KUBO

If we don't sleep we'll be slow.
And if we're slow, we'll be...

MONKEY

... Yes. I'm quite familiar with
this trail of logic.

Monkey gives Kubo an "annoyed" look. She says pointedly...

MONKEY

A lifetime ago, I remember a little
boy who talked very little.

KUBO

A lifetime ago, you spoke to that little boy about your story. You said you'd prefer to still be the one telling it.

MONKEY

(softening)

And you said you'd prefer to still be the one hearing it.

KUBO

Well, now's our chance. Tell us your story, mother. Tell it all, as clearly as you can remember.

MONKEY

With clarity, my story only becomes more... "disturbing."

BEETLE

That is sometimes the price we pay for clarity.

Monkey considers these words. Looks over to see both Kubo and Beetle looking at her like, "*please?*"

And finally...

MONKEY

I went to the temple of the mind to *kill* Yukami.

As Beetle and Kubo react in surprise she continues.

MONKEY

That's why I was there. *That's* how we met. My sisters and I had been to that temple many times.

(softly)

We had killed many noble men.

A beat. Then, wordlessly, Kubo slides his shamisen towards Monkey, urging her to continue.

But Monkey just stares at the musical instrument a bit sadly.

Then she holds up her big PAWS, indicating she can't use them to pluck the instrument's strings.

MONKEY

(re: her paws)

Good for swinging. And fighting. Not much else.

KUBO

Then I shall help you. You and I.
We'll tell your story... together.

With that, Kubo picks up the shamisen again and gives it a PLUCK. And immediately:

All around the cave, pebbles and twigs and fish bones and stalactites all begin to TREMBLE and MOVE.

Just like when that sail boat formed, they are ATTACHING and WEAVING together to form --

THE VARIOUS CHARACTERS AND WORLDS OF SARIATU'S STORY!

The berries and pebbles rise into the air to become a kind of LIVING PLANETARIUM, depicting the NIGHT SKY!

MONKEY

It was my father who would send us.

As Monkey says this, she points directly at the "moon."

MONKEY

He told us any man who found the armor would grow far too powerful. He said it was our duty to make sure that never happened.

As Monkey says this, several of the stars around the moon begin FORMING INTO HUMAN FIGURES.

We recognize these figures: *it's Sariatu leading the three sisters down to Earth!*

MONKEY

The night I met Yukami, I arrived at the temple moments before my sisters. And there he was.

As she says this, the objects of the cave form a more elaborate version of the tableau we have seen twice now:

It's of Yukami first meeting Sariatu in the temple.

Now we see that Yukami was standing there before the sword. Until he notices Sariatu's REFLECTION in one of the pools.

MONKEY

"You have offended my father," I told him. "Now you must die."

Just like we've seen before, the Yukami of the tableau turns to face Sariatu and drops to his knees as Monkey narrates...

MONKEY

Yukami fell to his knees. But not in fear. He simply looked up at me and uttered four simple words. These words changed everything.

BEETLE

Four words?
(guesses)
"I love you... you"?

MONKEY

"*This* was my quest," he whispered as his eyes filled with joy and reverence and utter... certainty.
(softly)
I had *seen* so many wonders of the universe. But the warmth of his gaze? That I had never known.

Suddenly, Sariatu grabs Yukami and pulls him into the shadows. A moment later, three dark FIGURES float past.

NOT wearing masks, it's the sisters. They look very similar to Sariatu as they glide around, searching the chamber.

MONKEY

I realize now, that this was his *humanity*. And it was more powerful than anything from my cold realm.

As the sisters EXIT, Yukami and Sariatu emerge from the shadows, holding each other closely now.

MONKEY

And so I saved his life.

KUBO

Which was just the beginning.

As Kubo says this, he stares at the new tableau that has formed: Sariatu & Yukami holding BABY KUBO in their arms.

MONKEY

Yes. I have thought many times it would have made a much better ending. The three of us together. Sharing that warmth. Forever.

Meanwhile, baby Kubo smiles happily, blinking both his bright eyes. Whatever happened to his eye, hasn't gone down yet.

MONKEY

But then, my father found us.

We recognize the new tableau that is forming as a more vivid rendering of SARIATU'S DREAM back in the cave (page 21).

And there it is: THAT HIDEOUS DRAGON BEAST! IT POKES OUT Kubo's eye as the sisters (now in masks) run interference.

MONKEY

My sisters wore masks to cover
their beauty, so what happened to
me would never be repeated. My
father wanted to make sure of that.
He wished to make an example of me.

But then comes the part we didn't see in the dream. As the beast prepares to POKE OUT Kubo's other eye --

An entire ARMY of BEETLE-CRESTED SAMURAI arrive on the scene to do battle with the beast and the three sisters.

As they fight, Sariatu GRABS the now one-eyed Kubo and flees, boarding a boat to cross the OCEAN. This was our PROLOGUE!

MONKEY

Yukami and his army gave their
lives, allowing me to escape with
Kubo in my arms. But my body was
badly injured during that journey.

And off Sariatu SMASHING her head on that same rock, we go to a new tableau. It's Sariatu with Kubo in that cave.

And as Kubo GROWS UP from baby to boy, we see Sariatu carving a tiny version of that Netsuke charm out of wood...

MONKEY

It caused my mind to grow weaker,
while Kubo grew stronger. I did
all I could to prepare him as my
memories faded away. I readied the
magic that would one day transform
me. I taught Kubo my song...

But on this note, Monkey PAUSES. This is because --

Like a child hearing a bedtime story, Kubo has fallen ASLEEP.

Monkey rises and sweeps Kubo into her arms, carrying him to a corner of the cave and using his robes to gently tuck him in.

She notices Beetle watching her. His expression SOLEMN.

BEETLE

I think I know the answer. To one
of my own questions.

Monkey sees where he's going with this. She supplies...

MONKEY

Why I didn't tell Kubo sooner that
I was his mother?

BEETLE

(nodding)

You don't know how much longer this
magic will last. He will lose you
again. And when he does, you need
him to be ready. To be on his own.

And now it is Monkey who nods.

MONKEY

If I just keep my heart beating a
little longer, I can help him make
it to the end of this quest.

With that she looks down, lost in thought. Not sure what to
do, Beetle awkwardly touches her arm to COMFORT her.

MONKEY

But no matter what, I will be gone
soon. And Yukami is long dead. It
must be you who stays by his side.

BEETLE

Of course. He is the son of my
master. I will serve him always.

MONKEY

No. Not as a servant.
(then)
A boy needs a father.

Beetle nods slowly, liking the sound of that. Another moment
of quiet. Just Kubo's peaceful breathing. And then...

BEETLE

And perhaps Yukami might not be as
dead as you think.

Off Monkey's confused look, Beetle continues.

BEETLE

The Ningen showed *me* something too.
(hopeful smile)
It showed me that the rest of my
clan have not yet left this world.

Monkey leans forward. It's clear she didn't know this.

BEETLE

They have been trapped somewhere by your father. I couldn't see where.

MONKEY

Yukami! Was he with him?

BEETLE

I believe he was. I *felt* him. I felt the presence of my master.

MONKEY

To see my husband one last time.
To introduce Kubo to his father.
That would be such a fine way to end my song.

Beetle considers this. Then he looks up at the pebble and berry "cosmos" above. Then over at sleeping Kubo.

BEETLE

Your song will never end, Sariatu.

(re: Kubo)

It will be sung by him. And by the people he shares it with. And by the people they share it with. Until it has reached... everyone.

And we can tell, Monkey likes the sound of *that*.

MONKEY

I may have been wrong about you, samurai. Perhaps you do have one or two... "indispensabilities."

Beetle seems puzzled by these words. Then he realizes...

BEETLE

That was a joke! You just made a joke. You were being funny.

MONKEY

("protesting")

How could that be funny? Nobody was falling or getting injured.

BEETLE

You know very well, that was not an entirely serious comment.

MONKEY

(barest hint of a smile)

I have no idea what you're talking about...

Their "argument" continues under those "stars," as we move TIGHTER and TIGHTER on Kubo's sleeping eye --

EXT. CAVE THAT REMINDS US OF HOME -- MIDDLE OF NIGHT

Kubo's eye BLINKS open and registers... SURPRISE. He sees:

Sariatu & Yukami. Looking down at him, smiling comfortingly.

Confused, Kubo BLINKS his eye again. And now he sees:

The tiny "Sariatu" & "Yukami" figures, like from mother's dream! They tug on Kubo's robe, gesturing for him to get up.

Still disoriented, Kubo slowly sits up.

Now the figures beckon for him to FOLLOW them as they scamper past sleeping Monkey and Beetle, heading outside of the cave.

Kubo hesitates. Then elects to go with them, grabbing his shamisen as he moves silently out of the cave to --

EXT. PATH THAT REMINDS US OF HOME -- MIDDLE OF NIGHT

The figures motion for Kubo to HURRY UP as they lead him down a path that feels eerily familiar to the one back home.

As Kubo descends the path, he hears the plucked notes of a shamisen playing a MAGNIFICENT SONG. The song grows louder.

Kubo finally arrives at --

EXT. TWISTED RIVER -- CONTINUOUS

This river holds a strange resemblance to the one at the cemetery, where Kubo first met his aunts.

Adding further SIMILARITY to that earlier encounter: through the mist, on the other side of the river, Kubo sees a FIGURE.

But unlike before, this figure is a man, playing a shamisen as hundreds of FIREFLIES dance around and above him.

Echoing the notes of the song, the fireflies make gorgeous flashing PATTERNS in the night sky.

Kubo now gets a better look at the man. He's OLDER looking. Sweet and pleasant looking with a big smile on his face.

Kubo WAVES hesitantly. But the old man doesn't acknowledge him. In fact, he doesn't appear to see Kubo.

As Kubo gets a better look at the old man's fixed, unblinking gaze, he quickly realizes: this old man is completely BLIND.

KUBO

Hello!

Still no response from the old man. His song is too LOUD.

KUBO

HELLO THERE!

Realizing the music is just too powerful for the old man to hear his shouts, Kubo raises his own shamisen as he --

Accompanies the old man in an "dueling shamisen" duet.

The fireflies surround Kubo now as he and the old man perform this lovely, eerie, heartbreaking song like two virtuosos.

As they CONCLUDE their performance, the flashing wall of fireflies LIFTS to REVEAL:

The man is now on Kubo's side of the river, "staring" at him!

OLD MAN

Hello, my young friend. Would you believe me if I told you I knew you were here all along?

The old man's sudden proximity causes Kubo to step backward.

KUBO

I might. If you gave me reason to.

OLD MAN

I wanted you to join my song.

KUBO

Well, I'm very glad I did that.

OLD MAN

And I am happy you are glad.

KUBO

But how did you know? You are...

OLD MAN

Even blinder than you?

The old man smiles to let Kubo know he is being light-hearted. Never one to back down, Kubo adds...

KUBO

Twice as much. To be precise.

OLD MAN
Which means I see double the truth.

Intrigued by this, Kubo moves closer as the man explains...

OLD MAN
Where do you think your stories
come from, Kubo?
(re: Kubo's eye patch)
Have you not realized, *that* one is
the eye that truly sees.

Hearing his name spoken, Kubo suddenly backs up.

KUBO
The last time a stranger knew my
name, things didn't go so well.

OLD MAN
I wouldn't worry about that, Kubo.
Nothing can harm you here. No
matter how this story unfolds.

And now Kubo realizes...

KUBO
I'm dreaming! This is all a dream.
(still wary)
Is this a good dream or a bad one?

OLD MAN
This is a *beautiful* dream, Kubo.
Because it holds meaning.

KUBO
What is the meaning?

OLD MAN
The meaning is... *everything*.

The man gestures to something across the river as he adds...

OLD MAN
Everything you have always wanted.

Kubo looks where the man is pointing and sees:

The river has suddenly EXPANDED into a giant MOAT, housing a
huge and magnificent *STONE FORTRESS*.

But gradually this structure dissolves into --

Rows and rows of SAMURAI, wearing the BEETLE CREST on their
armor. All of them stand very STILL, frozen in tableau.

Past them, is a beautiful GOLDEN THRONE in the shape of a beetle. And floating above this throne is --

A golden HELMET. It's similar in style to the sword and breastplate. Kubo immediately recognizes it as...

KUBO

The helmet of wisdom unimaginable!

OLD MAN

It's right behind the sun. In the place that might have been your home. Claim your birthright, Kubo!
(raising his shamisen)
Give this story... a happy ending!

And with that, the old man PLUCKS a single VERY LOUD note, SNAPPING the string on his shamisen in half and --

INT. CAVE THAT REMINDS US OF HOME -- DAWN

Kubo snaps up, wearing a look of epiphany on his face. He rushes over to SHAKE Monkey awake. Then a groggy Beetle.

KUBO

Mother! Beetle! It is time!

BEETLE

(mumbles)
Time for breakfast?

KUBO

Yes, Beetle. It's time for breakfast.
(then)
And *after* breakfast, it's time to end this story, once and for all!

EXT. THE FARLANDS -- SUNRISE

And in a story filled with beautiful landscapes and panorama shots, this is likely to be the one we remember most.

It's of Kubo. With Monkey and Beetle walking next to him and Yukami Origami pointing the way.

Our heroes are heading west into an ENORMOUS BLAZING SUN.

The backlight MULTIPLIES their shadows across the horizon, turning the heroes into an *infinite family of PAPER DOLLS*.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. MOUNTAIN PASS -- THE FARLANDS -- LATE AFTERNOON

As our heroes hike through the mountains, they suddenly hear the singing of hundreds of BIRDS, coming from above!

They look like HERONS, but with a MAGICAL BLUE GLOW. And as they pass overhead, we begin to recognize their song...

It's a symphonic version of the song from Kubo's dream.

BEETLE

What are those things?

MONKEY

They're blue heron. It's quite rare to see them. Even out here.

KUBO

Why are they... glowing?

MONKEY

It is believed they hold the souls of the departed, carrying them over to wherever they may need to go.

KUBO

I know their song. I heard it last night, in my dream. I played it.

Hearing this, Monkey glances at Kubo, a bit troubled.

MONKEY

It's called, the song of the dead.

BEETLE

The song of the dead? Then why is it so... joyful?

MONKEY

Not everybody hears it that way. Some find it to be so sad they can hardly stand to listen.

They stand there listening to the song as the waves of glowing heron continue flying above them. And then...

KUBO

It's a little sad. But it's also beautiful. It holds... meaning.

MONKEY

Many say it's about what happens when we die. How we don't just... disappear.

BEETLE

We don't? So what happens to us?

MONKEY

Like Kubo's paper, we shift. We transform. So we may continue our story, as we move closer and closer to the Blissful Purelands.

KUBO

What happens in the Purelands?

MONKEY

I don't know that. I just know we'll all be there together.

A moment as they all consider this. And then...

BEETLE

But we're together right now.

Monkey looks over at Beetle, her eyes NARROWING. Then slowly, she begins to NOD. He's absolutely right.

KUBO (O.S.)

Monkey! Beetle!

Kubo has followed the final heron around a bend and he and Yukami Origami are both now POINTING upward at --

THE STONE REMAINS OF A MASSIVE ISLAND FORTRESS!!!

We've seen a version of this place earlier, in Kubo's dream.

KUBO

This used to be my father's castle!
I saw it last night.

BEETLE

... Me too. I've seen it too. I
remember this place. I think.

KUBO

The helmet is in there. I know it!
But how do we get to it?

As Kubo says this, Beetle suddenly pulls and loads his bow.

He then takes a knee next to Kubo and shows him how to DRAW the bow back and AIM the arrow as he tells him...

BEETLE

The son of Master Yukami shall not
be kept from his home. *RELEASE!*

And with that, Kubo RELEASES the arrow. It ARCS all the way over the moat and HITS a tiny STONE mounted near the castle.

Immediately, a GIANT BRIDGE swings up from where it was hidden under the water, connecting the two land masses!

The bridge is painted with: THE CREST OF THE BEETLE SAMURAI!

Kubo stares at the bridge in wonder as Beetle pats him proudly on the back. Finally Kubo whispers...

KUBO
My helmet. Beetle's memories.
(turns to Monkey)
I wonder what this place has for
you, Mother.

As they enter the bridge, Monkey gives Kubo a supportive smile. But we can see there's an edge here as she answers...

MONKEY
I suppose we shall find out.

INT. ENTRY HALLWAY -- REMAINS OF THE BEETLE FORTRESS -- DUSK

A huge torn BANNER displaying the BEETLE CREST flaps in the evening wind as the trio moves through the ruins.

It's clear this place was once SPLENDID, filled with WEAPONS and ARMOR and beautiful ART. But it's all fallen into RUIN.

Kubo steps around the shattered glass remains of a giant, gold-framed MIRROR as he turns to Monkey.

KUBO
Your family did this, didn't they?
After you escaped the Farlands.
They defeated the beetle clan
samurai and destroyed their home.

As Monkey nods gravely, Beetle stops by that same mirror.

BEETLE
Well then, where was I? Why wasn't
I with my clan? Was I... a coward?

MONKEY
I highly doubt that.

KUBO
Me too.

And off Beetle, a little uncertain now --

INT. STUDY -- REMAINS OF THE BEETLE FORTRESS -- CONTINUOUS

This room seems like it was entirely dedicated to Yukami's quest for the armor. It's filled with MAPS of the Farlands.

Also, there are DRAWINGS of Ningen and Odokuro, DIAGRAMS of "The Temple Of The Mind," even SKETCHES of the armor itself.

Our heroes walk through it, gazing around in wonder at the various memories of their journey.

KUBO

This must have been where my father prepared for his quest.

Kubo continues looking around as he describes...

KUBO

He pieced together the clues to the armor's location. Determined the obstacles. Mapped his course.

BEETLE

Something isn't adding up.

Monkey and Kubo turn to Beetle, not sure what he means.

BEETLE

Yukami gave up his quest when he met Sariatu. He never found what he was look for, right?

MONKEY

He did find what he was looking for. It just wasn't the armor.

BEETLE

I understand. But then why would the helmet be *here*? In his castle?

They all consider this. It's a good question. But Yukami Origami is still confidently POINTING the way.

INT. GREAT HALL -- REMAINS OF THE FORTRESS -- NIGHT

We may notice the MOON, peeking through a cracked HOLE in the ceiling as Kubo, Monkey, and Beetle all look around.

This long hall stretches for hundreds of yards and is lined with rows and rows of ornate SAMURAI ARMOR on display.

As the moon's blue light illuminates the empty samurai shells, Beetle's eyes go wide with realization.

BEETLE

My memories. I feel them strongly
now. This was where we kept our
armor. Prepared for every battle.

Meanwhile, Kubo's eye follows the length of the room... and
then STOPS. At the very end of the hall sits --

A GOLDEN THRONE

Just like the one the old man showed Kubo in his dream. And,
as in the dream, floating above the throne is --

AN AMAZING GOLDEN HELMET!

The lovely sweeping lines of the helm curve around an elegant
war mask.

KUBO

It's here! We found it!

Kubo's shamisen slips forgotten out of his hand as he RUSHES
across the room to take his place on the throne.

As Monkey watches him, she suddenly notices something BEHIND
pointing Yukami Origami that makes her eyes go wide in FEAR:

MONKEY

KUBO! WAIT!!!

But it's already too late.

As Kubo slides into the seat under his father's helmet, we
hear the harsh CLICK of metal.

And a moment later --

THE THRONE SPROUTS RESTRAINTS THAT LOCK KUBO INTO PLACE!!!

Kubo struggles to free himself, but now the golden helmet
SLAMS down onto his head, cutting off ALL remaining movement.

The mask covers the entirety of Kubo's face, except for his
one good eye which we see darting around in PANIC as --

A SLENDER FOOT STOMPS ON YUKAMI ORIGAMI, CRUSHING HIS BODY!

Yukami Origami lies MOTIONLESS as a familiar GIGGLE fills the
great hall and we ANGLE UP from Yukami's body to see:

ECLIPSE! THE SISTER WITH THE RIDICULOUSLY LONG PIPE!

SMOKE is already curling up from that pipe of hers as Eclipse
GLIDES around to BLOCK Beetle & Monkey from reaching Kubo.

ECLIPSE

Our father visited Kubo last night
in his sleep. He saw this was what
was guiding your journey.

(re: crushed Yukami)

You should never trust paper. It
can so easily be... refolded.

MONKEY

(drawing her sword)

Release my son, Eclipse. Or I
swear, you will join your sisters.

ECLIPSE

You think I haven't realized yet?
We were *your* sisters too, Sariatu.

As Eclipse speaks, Beetle attempts to get past her to Kubo.

But without even pausing, Eclipse casually waves her arm and
immediately SPIKES EXTEND FROM THE THRONE, AIMED AT KUBO!

The meaning is clear: *don't move any closer, or else!*

ECLIPSE

... I remember how we looked up to
you. Me especially. Of all my
sisters, you shone the brightest.

MONKEY

I still do. Just not in the way
you understand.

ECLIPSE

Then come back to us. To your
proper home amongst the stars. We
can all be a family again.

With another wave of her arm, those spikes RETRACT as Eclipse
now approaches Kubo, drawing that familiar CURVED BLADE.

ECLIPSE

There's just this one simple matter
that we must first attend to.

As Eclipse moves closer to Kubo, Beetle FIRES an arrow at her
which she easily DEFLECTS with her chain. Turns to Beetle.

ECLIPSE

And then there's you. The thieving
insect who somehow stole my
sister's soul. I see my punishment
has done nothing to humble you.

Noticing the CONFUSION in Beetle and Monkey's eyes as she says this, Eclipse throws back her head and GIGGLES again.

ECLIPSE

You mean to tell me, you've been
together all this time and you
haven't even realized?

As she asks this, a puff of smoke from her pipe, drifts to the lifeless Yukami Origami and RAISES him into the air.

Eclipse speaks directly to Beetle as she motions to Monkey.

ECLIPSE

You took her from us. It was only
fitting we took something from you.
(then)
How swiftly those memories spilled
from your head. Wiping out all
recollection of your obscene union.

We can sort of see what the smoke is doing now. It is
REFOLDING the lifeless Yukami Origami into something... else.

ECLIPSE

You should have stayed sitting on
your throne. Instead of getting
tangled up with stars, Yukami.

Now we REVEAL, the smoke has REFOLDED Yukami origami into:

AN EXACT REPLICA OF BEETLE HIMSELF!

Which it then SHREDS into a million tiny pieces as Kubo helplessly looks on, a SINGLE TEAR falling from his eye.

ECLIPSE

If you had, you could have retained
your precious memories. You could
have kept your body.

The SMOKE is POURING out of her pipe as Eclipse continues.

ECLIPSE

And your poor men. They could have
stayed noble warriors. They would
never have had to become my pets.

And now we get a CLOSER look at the pipe smoke, seeing for the first time within the vapor: the *FACES* of Yukami's army, the beetle clan samurai. FROZEN in mindless compliance.

Beetle stares in HORROR as the smoke drifts and curls its way INSIDE each suit of samurai armor lining the hall.

The armor suddenly begins to TWITCH and JERK with life.

ECLIPSE

Now you both know what needs to be
done. Please don't try to stop me.
It will only make this... sadder.

As she says this, the reanimated samurai armor immediately
marches in to form a menacing CIRCLE around Monkey & Beetle.

Beetle turns to Monkey. Regards her for a moment. Then...

BEETLE

Back in the cave. When Kubo was
asleep. That's when I began...

MONKEY

... suspecting?

BEETLE

(nodding)
It's just, if I had been wrong.

MONKEY

You couldn't betray your master.

BEETLE

But I remember now. My wife. My
son. You are my true masters.

MONKEY

And how do you propose to serve
these masters of yours, my husband?

Beetle doesn't respond with words. Instead he shoots Monkey
a meaningful look, as if to say, "*I think you know.*"

After a moment, Monkey nods back at him with a grim smile.
She understands what he's getting at. And then --

BOTH MONKEY & BEETLE RAISE THEIR WEAPONS AND ATTACK!

In a desperate effort to get through the ghost samurai to
Kubo, Monkey and Beetle both fight BEYOND FURIOUSLY.

Monkey slashes tirelessly with the SWORD while Beetle uses
the BREASTPLATE as an offensive melee smashing device.

But as they cut a swathe through the dozens of soldiers...

MONKEY

YUKAMI! OUR SON!!!

Beetle turns to look where she's pointing and sees:

Eclipse is gliding across the ceiling towards Kubo, GIGGLING horrifically. Her curved blade gleaming, until --

THWIP! THWIP! THWIP! Three arrows whistle through the air, pinning Eclipse to the ceiling.

As Eclipse struggles to get loose, Beetle LEAPS onto the wall and begins climbing in an insect sprint towards her.

Meanwhile, Monkey moves closer to Kubo as she SLASHES her way through samurai after samurai.

However, each suit of armor that falls hastily REASSEMBLES itself into a *distorted, mismatched SAMURAI ABOMINATION with arms and legs in all the wrong places!*

Directly above Sariatu, Eclipse frees herself from the arrows, just as Beetle JUMPS on top of her and GRABS her!

Holding her against the ceiling with one arm, he SMASHES her with that breastplate, putting a small CRACK in her mask!

BEETLE

You will leave him alone!

He SMASHES her again, deepening the CRACK.

ECLIPSE

Perhaps I shouldn't have told you the truth, insect. Now you have something worth fighting for.

BEETLE

Even before you told me. I knew that boy was worth dying for.

He SMASHES her a third time as BELOW him, Monkey is starting to get OVERWHELMED by the tireless samurai abominations.

As Beetle lifts the breastplate to SMASH Eclipse again, we notice: *that familiar CHAIN snaking towards Beetle's foot.*

ECLIPSE

Then by all means, die for him.
Die for the son you don't remember.

The chain now COILS around Beetle's leg, DANGLING him in the air long enough for Eclipse to draw her curved blade and --

SLICE COMPLETELY THROUGH BEETLE'S ARM THAT WAS HOLDING HER!

Beetle roars in pain as both he and Eclipse fall in a clump on the floor. Her long pipe dropping a few feet away.

Even missing an arm, Beetle's fight with Eclipse continues as nearby, those twisted samurai just keep coming after Monkey.

MONKEY

Yukami, the pipe! Break the pipe!

Beetle understands what this means. He turns his attention away from Eclipse in order to grab that pipe and --

-- SNAP IT IN HALF over his knee.

Immediately the "possessed" armor COLLAPSES to the ground.

Beetle watches with a momentary look of SATISFACTION as the smoke pours out of the armor, rising away into the sky.

BEETLE

I release you with honor, my men.

But as he turns away to bring his attention back to Eclipse --

SHE IS RIGHT THERE, PLUNGING HER SICKLE INTO HIS CHEST!

And STILL their fight continues as Beetle will *not* go down.

Like her sisters, Eclipse also wields that chain, but hers is more powerful as it SNAPS and GRABS and grows spiky THORNS.

Meanwhile, Monkey limps past the scattered samurai armor, over to the golden throne holding her son captive.

Kubo's eye watches silently as Monkey --

RAISES HER SWORD AND BRINGS IT DOWN ON THE THRONE!

It easily DESTROYS the throne, freeing Kubo from his restraints and allowing him to REMOVE the false helmet.

But before Monkey can even say a word to her son --

Eclipse's HUGE and FRENZIED monster of a chain, SNATCHES her and YANKS her away.

Kubo watches in horror as Eclipse and that hideous, thorned metal serpent gang up on Monkey.

Despite Monkey's best efforts to fight back, she is getting BEATEN and POUNDED and HAMMERED all around the room.

But then Kubo realizes something else...

KUBO

(looking all around)

Father?!?

Frantically, Kubo glances all around the hall. And then, we can tell, Kubo SEES Beetle. His heart SINKING.

Then we see Beetle.

And our heart SINKS too.

Beetle is lying there in a pool of blood. His limbs have been hacked and sliced. He can barely move his head.

KUBO
FATHER!!!

As the one-sided, Monkey vs Eclipse battle continues, Kubo RUSHES over to Beetle, kneeling helplessly over him.

Beetle can only whisper a single word.

BEETLE
... *Shamisen.*

Realizing what his father is saying, Kubo turns to look. *His shamisen is lying on the floor, exactly where he dropped it!*

As Kubo SPRINTS across the long hall towards it, Eclipse's chain continues WHIPPING and BASHING Monkey.

Until finally, it TIES Monkey helpless as Eclipse grabs the Sword Unbreakable and FLOATS into the air directly above her.

ECLIPSE
You should have just given me the
eye, Sariatu. This could have been
a happy ending for all our family.

As Eclipse RAISES the sword for what is clearly a diving DEATH BLOW on Monkey's head, time seems to SLOW DOWN.

THUMP... THUMP...

It takes us a moment to realize that all we are hearing now is the quiet THUMPING of Monkey's weakened HEARTBEAT as --

Eclipse PLUMMETS towards Monkey, sword raised over her head.

THUMP... THUMP...

Kubo races towards the shamisen, sliding like a base runner.

THUMP... THUMP...

Beetle crawls towards Monkey, trying so hard to reach her.

THUMP... THUMP...

Eclipse reaches Monkey, SWINGING the sword down on her neck.

KUBO GRABS THE SHAMISEN AND RAKES HIS FINGERS ACROSS THE STRINGS SO VIOLENTLY THAT TWO OF THEM ACTUALLY SNAP IN HALF!

And then, in direct CONTRAST to that quiet heartbeat...

THE THUNDEROUS SOUNDS OF THE SHAMISEN REVERBERATES AS A SHOCKWAVE OF BLINDING WHITE EXPLODES FROM THE INSTRUMENT!!!

The single CHORD is so mighty that it SPLITS Eclipse's mask in two before sending all that we see into --

PURE WHITE LIGHT!!!

As we gradually FADE IN from the white, Kubo slowly gets his bearings, BLINKING his eye to see:

That small NETSUKE STATUE just a few inches away from him.

Dazed and disoriented, Kubo reaches for the statue. But as he does, his face goes PALE. And this is because:

The statue is now BROKEN. It's missing its head!

KUBO

Mother?

But, of course, there is no response. Now Kubo looks around the hall in mounting panic as he calls out...

KUBO

Mother? Father?

He rises and runs through the hall, passing ECLIPSE'S BROKEN MASK as he searches frantically for his parents.

But then Kubo STOPS. Just STOPS.

TEARS in his eye, he DROPS to his knees, staring down at a bug. A tiny DEAD BEETLE. Curled around something else.

IT'S THE NETSUKE STATUE'S DECAPITATED HEAD!

We HOLD on the image of the dead beetle and the netsuke head as DROPS OF WATER now begin to obscure our view.

Then we hear WAILS, growing LOUDER and LOUDER as we realize:

Our young hero is finally CRYING in defeat.

And as his heartbroken wails ECHO through the lonely hall...

CUT TO:

BLACK.

Still in this darkness, we begin to notice a slight SOUND:

It could be Kubo's shamisen. But it's not the full, resonant PLUCKING we have grown used to.

It's more of a steady, dull PINGING.

And now we understand what this sound *is* as we FADE IN to:

INT. GREAT HALL -- REMAINS OF THE FORTRESS -- DAY

Kubo remains kneeling there on the floor, cradling the shamisen with the two broken strings in his lap.

A steady stream of TEAR DROPS fall from his eye, repeatedly HITTING the shamisen's final string.

Kubo is still crying. But now in surrendered SILENCE.

And as the full, heartbreaking IMPACT of this moment washes over us, we gradually WIDEN to REVEAL --

With each of Kubo's tears PINGING onto the remaining string, SOMETHING is happening behind him:

Yukami Origami's shredded remains are SURGING into the air, forming a mini BLIZZARD of wisping paper.

Each time Kubo's shamisen makes a sound, the paper blizzard seems to respond as it slowly forms:

A pathetic, flimsy version of Yukami Origami.

Finally sensing something behind him, Kubo turns to see the figure there. A pitiful, torn version of its former self.

And yet still --

Yukami MOTIONS with his broken sword, POINTING to something on the ground. We can't see what it is.

But Kubo doesn't really care.

KUBO
Stop it. It doesn't matter
anymore. We've lost.

He tosses his shamisen away and continues to CRY silently.

But Yukami Origami is not giving up...

Using all of his strength, the origami warrior DRAGS himself across the floor to stand at the place he was motioning to.

He POINTS his sword directly at the thing we can't yet see. But Kubo just shakes his head and mutters...

KUBO

If you cease to believe any of
this, even for an instant... then
our hero will surely perish.

And with that, he --

GRABS THE NETSUKE HEAD AND HURLS IT AT YUKAMI ORIGAMI!

And just like when that angry villager threw the rock and KNOCKED the miniature Yukami off the stage --

-- Yukami goes FLYING BACKWARD, hitting the ground.

He does not get back up as Kubo remains staring into space.

But then, just like at the river when Kubo went back to grab the crumpled lamp he had angrily thrown away --

Kubo has a change of heart.

He slowly rises and goes over to the place where Yukami fell, LOOKING DOWN to check on him.

Barely ALIVE, Yukami Origami, once again, POINTS with his sword, staring at Kubo beseechingly.

And now, finally, Kubo turns to see what he was pointing at:

It's a piece of paper. Looks like it blew in from the other room. Drawn on the paper is a SKETCH of the magical HELMET.

But from this angle, the sketch is UPSIDE DOWN. And when it is upside down, it no longer looks quite like a helmet.

It looks like something else. Something we RECOGNIZE.

A BELL!!!

Kubo's eyes go WIDE as he picks up the sketch and stares.

Then he rapidly FOLDS the bottom part of the paper so now --

It now looks like the BELL is hanging from a BELL TOWER! *An EXACT REPLICA of the bell tower from Kubo's village!*

Off Kubo STARING at the bell tower in total REALIZATION --

INT. GREAT HALL -- REMAINS OF THE FORTRESS -- MOMENT

Kubo packs his big bag with the sword, the breastplate, Beetle's bow & arrow, Yukami Origami, and the broken netsuke.

He then steps over to his shamisen. Picks it up. Stares at it for a moment.

Then he RAISES his hand high into the air and --

PLUCKS WITH ALL HIS MIGHT, SNAPPING THAT FINAL STRING!

And as that single NOTE echoes through the air...

NOTHING happens for a moment.

Ahhh, but then we hear a RUSTLING sound. And finally we see:

THAT HUGE BANNER WITH THE BEETLE CREST!

It has come fluttering into the room, enormously long and FLAPPING about madly. Like two WINGS in search of a body.

But Kubo doesn't seem afraid. Instead he EXTENDS HIS ARMS as WIDE as they can go. As if he is awaiting a HUGE HUG.

This allows the banner to WRAP around him, intertwining with and becoming part of his torn robes.

And just like when Kubo first left his home, the "wings" of the banner/robes then begin to --

FLAP FURIOUSLY, LIFTING KUBO HIGH UP INTO THE AIR!

Kubo rises up, SOARING above the ruins, up, up, up to --

EXT. FLYING HIGH ABOVE THE FARLANDS -- CONTINUOUS

In moments, Kubo is looking over the ENTIRE FARLANDS.

We can see the ruins of Yukami's castle, the long lake, the woods above the Temple of the Mind, the glacier...

But as his new wings fly him across the landscape and towards the Sudden Sea, he now notices:

Just like before, the long robe is WRAPPING itself around him, COCOONING his body and face.

The last thing it COVERS is his one good eye, taking us to --

BLACK.

HOLDING here in the silent darkness for a moment.

Until we notice a small sound. The tiny clinking of a BELL as it is blown around slightly in a rising WIND --

FADE IN.

Staring up at:

THE BELL FROM KUBO'S VILLAGE.

However, we're looking at it from UPSIDE DOWN.

So now it looks exactly like the sketch of the HELMET OF WISDOM UNIMAGINABLE!

This is Kubo's POV. He has landed and opened his eyes directly under the bell tower, back in --

EXT. MARKET SQUARE -- KUBO'S VILLAGE -- DAY

As Kubo struggles to his feet and stares up at the bell, we PULL BACK to SEE the sad remains of the rest of the village.

It has been utterly DECIMATED. Almost like a BOMB went off.

The once lively and colorful place has been fully BURNED TO THE GROUND and DESTROYED.

Kubo takes this in as he steps over to his bag, a few feet away. It's quiet enough to hear his FOOTSTEPS as he walks.

Going through his bag, Kubo pulls out his now useless UNSTRUNG SHAMISEN. Then he puts it back and takes out --

BEETLE'S BOW & ARROW!

He nods to himself. This will do.

Searching for a spot with a good angle on the bell tower, Kubo steps through the ash. Finds himself standing --

In the very place where he once told his stories.

This does not go unnoticed by Kubo.

Then, Kubo's DETERMINED expression returns as he loads the bow and arrow, just the way Beetle showed him.

He takes aim at the bell tower, targeting the KNOT of the rope that is holding the bell aloft.

And then he RELEASES the arrow...

EXT. BELL TOWER -- MARKET SQUARE -- DUSK

ANGLE DOWN from the now EMPTY bell tower to find --

Kubo is standing underneath it. *He now WEARS the breastplate and the sword... and is holding the helmet in his arms.*

Everything is far TOO BIG for him, and Kubo struggles a bit as he slides the oversized helmet onto his head.

But as the helmet slips into place, Kubo's expression changes. He SEES something now. It's right in front of him.

Then, we see it too. It's --

YUKAMI & SARIATU!!!

Both young and beautiful, like when they first met.

Yukami holds his longbow and PLUCKS its empty string.

Sariatu wraps her fingers around her wrist, making the gesture of a bracelet.

They both look at Kubo meaningfully. And then they are GONE.

Leaving Kubo standing there with an expression of --

UTTER CERTAINTY AND DETERMINATION!!!

Suddenly, Kubo cups his hands to his mouth and SHOUTS...

KUBO

GRANDFATHER! GRANDFATHER! IT'S ME
KUBO! I KNOW YOU CAN HEAR ME!

We slowly PULL BACK now, as if LOOKING DOWN on Kubo from HIGH ABOVE as our hero continues shouting...

KUBO

IT'S TIME FOR US TO PLAY ANOTHER
SONG TOGETHER.

From this NEW ANGLE, we can see: the entire empty village, the river with the unlit lamps, even the path leading up to --

EXT. KUBO'S CAVE -- SEEN FROM ABOVE -- CONTINUOUS

And was that our IMAGINATION or:

Did that LITTLE GIRL ACROBAT and her BROTHERS and a few other VILLAGERS just PEEK out of Kubo's cave, cocking their heads as Kubo's shouts echo faintly in the wind?

EXT. MARKET SQUARE -- NIGHT

As dusk turns to night, Kubo spots it: THE FULL MOON. Up there above the Sudden Sea, staring down. Unblinking.

KUBO
Hello, grandfather.

As if in response, a low RUMBLING sound begins growing louder and louder as suddenly --

A TSUNAMI-SIZED WAVE RISES UP IN FRONT OF THE MOON!

Just like the opening of our story, it gives the impression of a BLINKING eye as it rises higher and higher and finally --

CRASHES into the shore!

The wave is so large and powerful that the tide rolls all the way up to the village, water SWELLING around Kubo's knees.

As Kubo adjusts his bag to keep it dry, he suddenly hears --

A familiar MELODY played on a shamisen. It's that song of the dead, coming from behind him. Kubo WHIRLS to confront:

That sweet-faced BLIND OLD MAN from his dream!

He's wearing REGAL ROBES now that GLOW in the moonlight as he plucks away on his shamisen. We now understand this is --

GRANDFATHER
Hello, Grandson. Join me again,
why don't you?

He beckons for Kubo to join him in the intricate melody.

Kubo pulls the stringless shamisen from his bag and holds it up to show his Grandfather. Then he tosses it to the ground.

KUBO
I'd like too. But that's not the
song we're going to perform this
time.

This gives Grandfather pause. He stops playing now. Lowers his shamisen. Stares at Kubo with those "unseeing" eyes.

GRANDFATHER
I see.

KUBO
I know you do. That's how this all
began. You finally saw me.

Hearing this, Grandfather's "sightless" gaze suddenly comes to life. He SMILES at Kubo, no longer seeming so blind.

GRANDFATHER

So, what song did you have in mind?

KUBO

The one where I get my family back.
My mother. My father. My village.
And you never bother me again.

GRANDFATHER

That seems like a very difficult
melody to play.

KUBO

I'll give it a try if you will.

Kubo's confidence seems to amuse Grandfather. He smiles again, PRIDE for Kubo visible in his eyes.

GRANDFATHER

Oh, Kubo. Do you want to know
something funny?

Seeing Kubo's skeptical reaction, Grandfather explains..

GRANDFATHER

Not "laugh out loud" funny. More
"sad-truth-of-the-matter" funny.
You tell stories. You understand.

KUBO

So what is so funny?

GRANDFATHER

We both want *the exact same thing*.

Kubo didn't expect this. He looks at Grandfather, confused.

GRANDFATHER

We do. We really do. You want
your family back. And so do I.

KUBO

You want to take my other eye.
That's what you want.

GRANDFATHER

Of course I want your other eye.
But do you know why I want it?

KUBO

Because you are wrathful and cruel?

GRANDFATHER

Kubo *please!* I'm your *grandfather*.
Words can wound. You know that.

KUBO

So can chain-wielding aunts.

Grandfather nods, accepting this. Then he begins moving towards Kubo, COMPASSION in his eyes as he explains...

GRANDFATHER

Here's what you don't understand.
As long as you cling to that silly,
useless eye, you can't come up to
live with me in my kingdom.

Grandfather keeps moving closer to Kubo as he speaks.

GRANDFATHER

You can't share my power. You'll
be stuck down here in this hell
realm. Crying away with that
lonely eye from all the poverty and
sickness and suffering and death.

Very close to Kubo, Grandfather points up at the heavens.

GRANDFATHER

Where I want to take you? We have
none of those things. No tragedy.
No tears. It will just be you with
your entire family. Forever and
ever and ever.

KUBO

(re: the heavens)

No. That's not my family. You
killed my family.

GRANDFATHER

Grandson, I swear to you that your
mother is back up there right now.
She's waiting for you.

KUBO

I don't believe you.

GRANDFATHER

Not as a gray haired woman with an
addled brain. Or as a stinking
chimp with savage hands.

(whispers)

She is something... far more
glorious again.

KUBO

And my father, Yukami? What of him?

Off the name "Yukami," a brief expression of ANNOYANCE crosses Grandfather's sweet face. He quickly covers it up.

GRANDFATHER

Yukami brought his fate upon himself. He disgraced me. He disgraced the noble men that followed him. He upset the order of everything.

KUBO

That is how you tell the story.

GRANDFATHER

When you're up there with me, Kubo. You will be *beyond* stories. You will be... *infinite*.

Kubo considers this a moment. And then...

KUBO

What's the fun in that?

Hearing this, Grandfather's face CRACKS into annoyance one more time. This sweet old man clearly has a TEMPER.

KUBO

Our stories are the reason we're here. Telling them. Living them. And, yes, *ending* them. That's part of it too. That... balance.

As Kubo continues he REMOVES HIS ARMOR one piece at a time. Sets down the sword. Unfastens the breastplate...

KUBO

Because along with all the sad things you describe, our stories also contain sweetness, laughter, joy, reverence. And love.

Meanwhile, Grandfather is growing angrier and angrier. His skin taking on the appearance of a milky cataract-like SHELL.

KUBO

Good things. Working along *with* the bad to give all of it meaning.

And finally, Kubo REMOVES THE HELMET as he continues...

KUBO

And as a wise, blind man once told
me in a dream: the meaning is what
makes the whole song... *beautiful*.

And now, Grandfather's shell itself is also beginning to
CRACK. Like the MOLTING SKIN OF A SNAKE!

But Kubo is looking past him, up at the stars again,
observing the vast and dazzling NIGHT SKY.

TEARS of awe and joy and wistful wonder falls from his good
eye as he whispers...

KUBO

It's beautiful down here,
Grandfather. Your daughter saw it.
I see it. Even with just one eye.
And I'm not leaving. Perhaps you
should be the one to join *me*.

GRANDFATHER

ENOUGH CHILD!!!

As he SCREAMS this, his cocoon SHATTERS and EXPLODES outward,
and we spot --

THE BLUR OF A HIDEOUS HEAD, LAUNCHING HUNDREDS OF FEET INTO
THE AIR! IT'S SERPENTINE BODY TRAILS BEHIND IT!

GRANDFATHER

IT'S TIME TO END THIS STORY!!!

Seeming even smaller than usual, Kubo stands there looking up
at the towering, beastly form his grandfather has assumed:

*Like a LIVE version of the figure from Sariatu's dream, he is
a cross between a "bathysaurus" lizardfish and an overgrown
millipede, his pearly flesh PULSING in the moonlight!*

Giant tendrils of saliva fly out of his mouth as he hisses...

MOON BEAST (GRANDFATHER)

*If that helmet showed you anything
resembling wisdom... then you would
have known not to annoy me so.*

As the Moon Beast says this, the sword, breastplate, and
helmet RISE UP off the ground in front of Kubo.

They then begin FOLDING themselves together origami style
into SOMETHING ELSE entirely --

A MINIATURE, GOLDEN VERSION OF THE MOON BEAST HIMSELF!

MOON BEAST

*Because now, when I remove your
final piece of armor and take your
eye... I'm going to make it hurt.*

The miniature moon beast flies right at Kubo and savagely --

RIPS KUBO'S EYE PATCH OFF OF HIS FACE!

Staring down at his grandson, the beast begins to LAUGH, creating a BREEZE that blows Kubo's hair away from his eye.

And now we SEE what those bullying acrobats saw earlier:

IT'S KUBO'S NAKED FACE WITH HIS LEFT EYE FINALLY EXPOSED.

And as we expected, the eyeball is simply NOT THERE.

A thin but sad SCAR runs down Kubo's brow, stopping just above his tear-streaked cheek.

Staring down at tiny, patchless Kubo, Moon Beast continues to LAUGH, shaking the very foundation of the devastated village.

Kubo stares back up at him. But he does not look afraid.

KUBO

You might be surprised by what that
helmet showed me.

(then)

Yukami, now!

As Kubo shouts this, Yukami Origami jumps out of Kubo's bag, carrying the STRING from Beetle's longbow over to Kubo.

What is he doing?

Meanwhile, Kubo bends down to PICK UP his unstrung shamisen again, staring at it hopefully.

MOON BEAST

*What's this? You want to sing one
last song before we go?*

The Moon Beast SNEERS down at his grandson as Kubo KNEELS on the ground as if preparing to play the stringless instrument.

MOON BEAST

*Go ahead, play your broken toy.
Pluck your phantom strings. This I
would like very much to hear.*

With Kubo still kneeling on the ground hunched over his shamisen, the Moon Beast can't quite SEE what he's doing.

But now, we CAN! And the sight of it fills us with HOPE.

And this is because, Kubo is quickly and deftly --

RE-STRINGING HIS SHAMISEN!

He's using the string from Beetle's bow and his mother's silver hair from his braided bracelet.

With both in place functioning as STRINGS, Kubo stares at the EMPTY SPACE where the final string should go.

We know what Kubo is going to do. But even so, it still fills us with SUPREME SATISFACTION when our little hero --

Reaches up to his head and PLUCKS out a hair of his own!

He stretches it across the shamisen, completing the family of strings as he rises up, SHOUTING in his loudest voice...

KUBO

IF YOU MUST BLINK, DO IT NOW!!!

And with that, he *moistens his fingers by brushing them against the TEARS on his cheeks and then --*

PLUCKS the first string on the shamisen, producing a --

THUNDEROUS SOUND!!!

The note REVERBERATES all the way through the village and down to the cemetery. Where we see that now in the river:

All those dead paper lanterns are suddenly LIGHTING UP again!

This TRAIL OF LIGHT snakes from the river all the way through to the broken lanterns scattered around the market square.

The Moon Beast now begins to look concerned as Kubo is bathed in the warm glow of the REIGNITED spirit lights, shouting...

KUBO

*PAY CAREFUL ATTENTION TO EVERYTHING
YOU SEE AND HEAR! NO MATTER HOW
UNUSUAL IT MAY SEEM!!!*

With a FLICK of Kubo's wrist, the shamisen's SECOND STRING now echoes through the remains of the village.

The Moon Beast looks around in bewilderment as we hear the rustling of paper and groaning of timber. And then --

THE VILLAGE ITSELF BEGINS TO RISE FROM THE ASHES AND REBUILD!

As building after building REFORMS and settles into place,
their entry screens SLIDE OPEN and --

The ORIGAMI CREATURES that Kubo used to sell in the market
after his performances come RUSHING out of each dwelling.

Merging with flying TWIGS and PEBBLES and SAND, the origami
figures are GROWING BIGGER and BIGGER as they run.

They fall into position behind Kubo as he continues...

KUBO
*AND PLEASE BE WARNED. IF YOU
FIDGET. IF YOU LOOK AWAY...*

And now, surprisingly, we hear human VOICES joining Kubo!

KUBO & VOICES
(in unison)
*IF YOU CEASE TO BELIEVE ANY OF
THIS, EVEN FOR AN INSTANT...*

The voices belong to the VILLAGERS we saw hiding in the cave.

Standing in formation next to the giant origami figures, we
spot: the GIRL ACROBAT, her bullying BROTHERS, the STERN
MERCHANT, the old BEGGAR LADY and other familiar faces.

They all hold GLOWING LANTERNS of their own as they shout
together up at the Moon Beast...

KUBO & HIS ARMY
THEN YOU WILL SURELY PERISH!

And with that, Kubo PLUCKS the final string, producing...

The LOUDEST and LOVELIEST NOTE we have heard yet!

As the note echoes endlessly, the Moon Beast stares down at
Kubo and his army with an expression of utter SHOCK.

Because now, the ranks of Kubo's army have INCREASED again,
filling with still more PEOPLE:

- A pretty WOMAN and a handsome MAN standing next to the
three acrobat children.
- A smiling OLDER MAN, holding hands with the beggar woman.
- An elderly GRANDMA standing with the patient dad and the
very young girl we saw earlier at the cemetery.

Kubo addresses the Moon Beast on his own now.

KUBO

For these are the memories of those
we have loved and lost. And if we
hold their stories deep in our
hearts, then WE will surely win.

Kubo stands there defiantly, looking up at the Moon Beast,
who has clearly heard enough. The beast suddenly --

REARS BACK AND STRIKES DOWNWARD LIKE A SNAKE AT KUBO!

But as his giant, razor-fanged head approaches the ranks of
Kubo's army, it is explosively DEFLECTED by --

A BLUEISH FIELD that has appeared around the army, reminding
us of the GLOW that protected Sariatu's boat in the prologue.

The Moon Beast strikes AGAIN. And AGAIN.

Each time he is REPELLED by the field. His own pulsing glow
beginning to FADE as he grows weaker and weaker.

When the depleted Moon Beast is forced to back off in an
attempt to re-gather his strength. Kubo quietly concludes...

KUBO

And that really is the least of it.

With that, he brings his hand down on his shamisen, STRUMMING
all three strings at once.

Their sweet and unexpected HARMONY rings through the air as
behind Kubo something INCREDIBLE is happening:

The origami creatures, the spirits of the lost loved ones,
and the glowing lanterns are all --

MERGING TOGETHER AND RISING UP TO FORM ONE GIANT TIDAL WAVE!

As Kubo strums his shamisen again, the wave TOWERS above the
Moon Beast, then CRASHES down upon him!

The Moon Beast howls in ANGUISH as the wave swirls around
him, twisting into a VORTEX of energy that spins around,
sucking the remaining moonlight from his body.

Finally the vortex diminishes and the wave RECEDES to reveal:

The sweet faced old man from Kubo's dream. He looks around
in deep CONFUSION, as Kubo approaches him and kneels down.

KUBO

Hello, Grandfather. Are you ready
now... to let me be?

The old man stares at Kubo. Genuinely PUZZLED.

OLD MAN

Hello. What happened to your eye?

Kubo stares at his grandfather, uncertain what is going on.

OLD MAN

I'm sorry, young man. But I seem
to have forgotten my story.

Before Kubo can respond, the Stern Merchant pushes forward.

STERN MERCHANT

We'll tell him! We'll tell him
everything he needs to know.

As Kubo watches, the stern merchant approaches the old man.

STERN MERCHANT

You... are the kindest, sweetest
man to ever live in this village.

LITTLE GIRL ACROBAT

(stepping forward)

Every day, you walk around smiling
and handing out coins to children.

BEGGAR WOMAN

Sometimes you perform silly dances.
Just because it makes you happy...

Soon, each of the villagers is shouting out increasingly
crazy and outrageous details of the old man's "story."

Kubo watches and listens, his amused smile growing as we --

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. PATH DOWN TO CEMETERY -- WOODS OUTSIDE VILLAGE -- NIGHT

Under the tiniest SLIVER of moon, a long PROCESSIONAL of
VILLAGERS heads down the forest path leading to the RIVER.

We recognize all our friends who had been hiding in the cave.
They hold glowing paper LANTERNS as they move along solemnly.

Their found LOVED ONES walk by their side, identifiable by a
subtle "spirit glow" emanating around them in the moonlight.

As the processional arrives at the river, we spot Kubo.

He sits against a tree with Yukami Origami standing near him. Kubo is quietly TUNING his shamisen as he watches:

That patient dad and the very young girl, HUGGING the elderly grandma so very tightly. There are TEARS.

Kubo continues softly tuning his instrument, as we now see --

The patient dad and that very young girl, standing by the river bank, sadly waving GOOD-BYE to a floating paper lamp.

The elderly grandmother is no longer with them.

Just then, a HAND touches Kubo's shoulder.

It's the girl acrobat. She holds out something to Kubo: the crumpled PAPER LANTERN he made for his father earlier!

GIRL ACROBAT

We found it by the river bank.

And now the stocky acrobat steps into view from behind her.

STOCKY ACROBAT

When we were saying our good-byes.

And next to him, is the tall acrobat. He holds a second paper lantern and altar, offering them both to Kubo.

TALL ACROBAT

We thought you could maybe use another one. And an altar too.

KUBO

... But the festival has ended.

STOCKY ACROBAT

(grinning)

What *is* an ending, really?

After a moment, Kubo GRINS back as he accepts their gifts --

EXT. ALTAR -- CEMETARY -- NIGHT

The last of the remaining villagers file back up the path as Kubo assembles his new altar, Yukami Origami by his side.

Kubo finishes hanging the UNLIT lamps. Then gets to his knees, facing them. He begins speaking quietly.

KUBO

Hello, my parents. I've noticed my stories can tend to get... long. So I will keep my prayers brief.

Kubo pauses, thinking what he wants to say. Then...

KUBO

I am very grateful. I have had the chance to meet you both. Hear your wisdom. Feel your kindness. Even eat a meal sitting between the two of you. This was a happy story.

(a moment; then)

But let's be honest here: it could still be a *whole lot happier*.

Kubo leans closer to the altar, losing some formality now.

KUBO

And I don't know exactly what the rules are or how this works. But if there were any way to... you know. I still need you. It might not seem like it sometimes, but remember: *I'm just a little boy*.

(another moment; then)

So I could say this has been a happy story. Or I could *feel* it. We could all feel it. And then we could end this story... together.

Allowing that to be his conclusion, Kubo stares hopefully at the lamps. But they remain UNLIT.

Kubo waits there another few moments. Still NOTHING.

Kubo now *picks up his shamisen*, preparing to PLAY it. But something stops him. Instead, he puts it back in his bag.

Slowly he gets to his feet and turns away from the altar, heading back to the village. Yukami Origami by his side.

But then Kubo STOPS. Just STOPS.

He's looking down at Yukami Origami, who is now --

POINTING WITH HIS SWORD, RIGHT BACK AT THE ALTAR!

Kubo hesitates for a moment, perhaps saying a quick prayer. And then he TURNS to, once again, FACE THAT ALTAR.

As he does, we go TIGHT on Kubo's face.

It's LIT now... by something.

But it could just be the moonlight. It's hard to tell.

And just as Kubo is beginning to REACT to whatever it is that he sees or doesn't see by that altar, we hear...

KUBO'S VOICE (O.S.)
If you must blink do it now.

SNAPPING TO:

BLACK.

And then, more BLACK. This is a disturbingly long "blink."

We should begin thinking now: *they might do this! They might actually, conceivably END the movie right here!*

But then, we hear it: *The Song Of The Dead* as we FADE IN:

EXT. ABOVE THE BEACH -- NIGHT

High in the sky ABOVE the beach near the village, we now are getting a CLOSER look at these amazing, glowing HERON.

And we realize: *these birds are actually made of PAPER!!!*

As they FLY UP towards us, singing that sweet song, we begin to ANGLE DOWN, *moving through the flock*, back towards --

EXT. RIVER -- CEMETERY -- CONTINUOUS

The heron continue to FLY right past us as we now find ourselves looking directly down at the river.

There are just a few of those PAPER LAMPS left here, their LIGHT still glowing brightly as they float out to sea.

But when the lamps near the end of the river, we realize: *that's not exactly what is happening.* Instead --

The lanterns are beginning to REFOLD themselves on their own! Their light swells BRIGHTER and BRIGHTER as --

THE LAMPS TRANSFORM THEMSELVES INTO THOSE GLOWING HERON!

The newly-formed Blue Heron then FLAP their wings and RISE UP off the water to join the rest of their flock in the sky.

And this SPECTACULAR IMAGE is being watched by --

THREE FIGURES

Standing in SHADOW by the side of the river. The shortest of the figures looks up into the moonlight to reveal: it's Kubo.

His face is still partially hidden in shadow, but we can tell he's wearing a HUGE SMILE. And now we see why.

Standing on either side of Kubo, their hands resting gently on his shoulders are --

YUKAMI & SARIATU.

Kubo's parents look as YOUNG AND RESPLENDENT as they did in those giant images we saw on the temple walls.

If there is a "spirit glow" around them, we can't quite see it in this light. The couple seems as REAL as Kubo himself.

Both Yukami and Sariatu hold their own LIT lamps and wear HUGE SMILES of their own as they stand close to their son.

Kubo gazes up at both of them happily as he whispers...

KUBO

This was my quest.

And as he utters these words, Kubo face comes out of shadow and we now see:

KUBO NO LONGER WEARS HIS PATCH! HIS LEFT EYE IS THERE AGAIN!

Both of his eyes SPARKLE in the moonlight as he looks up at the heron flapping their wings, SOARING above the sea --

-- disappearing into the Night Sky.

KUBO'S VOICE (O.S.)

And that really is the least of it.

TAKING US TO:

WHITE.

ROLL END TITLES.